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**Examining influences on teaching
and learning in South Korean
classrooms**

By

Jeemin Cho

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of**

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Declaration.

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Jeemin Cho

Abstract.

This study investigates national primary schools in South Korea, specifically, focusing on identifying and describing the characteristics of the micro pedagogical content of the classroom, and various socio-cultural and historical influences on classroom pedagogy.

A mixed method exploratory approach was used. Eight focus group interviews were conducted with teachers and students to explore the field. Using a grounded theory methodology, the analysed results were then used to inform the quantitative survey design. As a result, 294 teacher questionnaires and 302 student questionnaire were collected from nine schools in Seoul. To check for consistency from earlier data collections, eight lesson observations and follow-up interviews from four schools were conducted. In addition, documentation and photographs were collected as supplementary materials.

This study has illustrated the effects of the past on the present. Specifically, demonstrated that the learning environment at the micro classroom level was informed by the historical and socio-cultural influences of the community and beyond. Especially post-war reconstruction, Confucianism, *chemyeon* and the structure of the honorific language have been shown to be informative and predictive of student and teacher behaviour.

Abbreviations.

BSAT	Basic Scholastic Ability Test
CHC	Confucian Heritage Culture
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
IAEP	International Assessment of education progress
KEDI	Korean Economic Development Institution
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NCLB	No Child Left behind act implemented in 2001
HRB	Human Resource Development
NNS	National Numeracy Strategy
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Programmed for International Student Assessment
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy study in Primary schools
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
TIMISS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of American
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

-Part 1- Introduction

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction.

1.0 Introduction.

This research investigates the Korean education system and, specifically, the teaching and learning commonly located within the school. Moreover, the study focuses on aspects of society's cultural activities that affect teachers' and students' behaviour in the classroom.

Teaching is a complex activity, varying from one situation to another, so that it is not easy to explain or define its nature with precision. Educational activities are inherently complex and symbolic both in the local settings in which they occur and beyond. Alexander (2000) argued that the very meaning of education, teaching and learning may vary according to the culture of that nation. Thus, teaching is a cultural activity, and is subject to many forces. Different cultures have various systems, beliefs, values, manners, normative behaviour and practices, and so the meaning of education differs from nation to nation. Moreover, according to Dewey (1958), human experience is not purely cognitive, rather it is physical, emotional and social at the same time so that variations may exist in the way teachers relate to their students, the goals that teachers have for learning, the way teachers approach the curriculum and textbooks and the way knowledge and communication are verbally transmitted to students.

Just as teaching takes on and is affected by many forces such as beliefs and values, learning should not simply be limited to what behavioural changes take place, as learning is a social activity. Learning depends on the individual's experience within their social

environment and more specifically, the educational institutions which they attend, while teaching involves the provision of those conditions that are intended to directly promote effective learning. Learners learn when they engage with knowledge in the social contexts, but learners also learn when they engage with things which we might not usually think of as knowledge. Broadly speaking, the process of learning is about making sense of experiences. These may involve formal education, but on the other hand learning can be informal like watching television, reading and even interacting with peers. We learn in different places and situations and learning changes and modifies our behaviour. Nonetheless, what matters is not so much the experience but how we interpret that experience.

Thus, in adopting this view, learning is likely to vary depending on where, how and why it takes place and who is doing the learning. If the social context influences learning, we must have some sense of the totality of ideas of the person, whether cultural, social or institutional. Hence, teachers' and students' past and present experience affects their classroom activities and what counts as knowledge, thus creating different teaching and learning cultural contexts. In addition, teachers indirectly learn to teach, and students to learn, in classroom life through years of participation in classroom experience, and are largely unaware of some of the most widespread attributes of teaching and learning in their own culture (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999).

On top of all these factors affecting teachers and students in any classroom experience, currently we live in an era in which the pace and extent of change are unprecedented, and where the scope of change is unavoidable. With new technological

advances, information and knowledge are no longer limited commodities and thus, the so called boundaries that surround each country are more permeable. These changes in the world which affect the makeup of the participants within the boundaries of the educational site, for instance family, school or state, alter the qualities of educational goals, outcomes, process and practices. Moreover, even the terms used in educational settings are always changing and debatable. Nowhere is this more salient than in Southeast Asia, specifically South Korea.

However, regardless of discipline or field, when thinking of Southeast Asia, the first countries which come to mind for the majority of individuals are China and Japan. The field of Asian studies, as well as the many sociologists who study Asian cultures, have a preoccupation with these two nations, reflected in countless journals and books. Thus, these findings are often assumed to apply across most of Asia, particularly Korea, which may have a very different history, culture, religion, tradition and customs.

Throughout its history, Korea has been a focus of rival interests among its neighbouring nations beginning with numerous invasions from China, Japanese occupations and the subsequent independence through the United States. It is unfortunate that research on the nation of Korea, its cultural struggles and tumultuous history of foreign occupations and invasions, has been very limited. This may be due to its geographical location in Asia, as Korea has always been a small nation surrounded by giants: Siberia, China and Japan. The consequence and turmoil of the Korean War served to divide the nation into North and South, a division that still continues today. Yet due to cultural aspects and historical struggles, Korea underwent as dramatic and rapid social,

economic, political and cultural change, as any nation. The expansion and growth of the 'modern' or 'formal' education system, which grew and developed within half a century (Kim, 2000) reflects this cultural change and has contributed to it.

Korea has been initiating and collaborating to actively compete with global giants, and has looked at the policies and practices of other governments for inspiration (Kim, H 2004). In relation to this, it has been suggested that governments and educational departments are attempting to transplant policies and practices from another national setting where it appears to be effective, with little understanding of the multi-layered historical, cultural and political contexts of their origin (Fuller and Clarke, 1994). Moreover, it is not unusual these days to find books and articles that engage in a systematic comparison of Eastern and Western philosophies (Clarke, 1997). These comparisons can be interesting; particularly when they help to shed light on philosophical issues neglected or underemphasised in particular cultures. However, a problem occurs when attempts are made to draw implications in modern Asian societies on the basis of stereotypes and generalisations about traditional cultural values. The recurring notion of essential differences is problematic, as the great majority of the studies compare and analyse Western culture and Asian culture. This is not to say we cannot learn and understand about others through comparisons, but to do so tends to involve the use of fixed binary interpretations and these tend to create a polarity that exaggerates reality. Some examples of the binary categorising and ubiquitous dichotomies are low context vs. high context (Hall, 1997), high vs. low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1991), individualism vs. collectivism (Gudykunst, 1994), communitarian (Confucian Asia) vs.

individualistic (west) (Hofstede, 1991). This sometimes creates an unfavourable classroom image and increases western perceptions of other cultures as inferior.

While it would seem inappropriate to categorise and discuss a finite set of instances of dichotomies of what constitute Asian or Western concepts, it does seem relevant to talk of the makeup of individuals within a shared history and especially in recurring social interactions, for example in the classroom. Moreover, one's cultural values and shared history are major factors in perceptual discrepancies, helping to supply us with our world-view.

Consequently, in order to develop an understanding of pedagogy of the Korean classroom, research needs to rely less upon such dichotomous views based on a generalisation of Korean pedagogy as 'Asian'. But the aim of this study is to develop an awareness of classroom experience in context, the Korean context. As Alexander implies:

'what happens in the classroom is actually rather important' (2000, p. 109) and *'human agency may be frail, especially among those with little power, but it happens daily and mundanely, and it deserves our attention'* (Holland et al, 1998; p. 5).

In this study, I attempt to broaden the understanding of national primary education in Korea, specifically the classroom experience of teachers and students. Primary schools are where the foundation of education and educational attitudes are laid. Thus, in order to describe and characterize pedagogy in primary national schools in Korea, this study investigates not only the micro context of teaching and learning of classroom interaction and schools, but the macro contribution of the social and cultural aspect of the educational system, policies and histories that make Korea. To explore issues concerning

the interplay of cultural values and pedagogy within Korea, the characteristics which define Korean culture and the characteristics that are ingrained within the nation's cultural fabric are investigated.

1.1 Significance of the study.

Korea has seen extensive growth and expansion of the education system and this has undoubtedly already been of great importance for success in a time of rapid economic change and development. Following the advances due to globalisation, many reform measures have been introduced within the last fifty years, and as such, the educational policies in Korea are generally referred to as 'forever changing policies' (Weidman and Park, 2002). Yet within this short time and in spite of numerous reform measures, the nature of children's actual experience in schools and classrooms has not received a great deal of research investigation. It seems imperative that we understand everyday classroom activity, in order to make future suggestions for and improvements to the system. Children develop dispositions and attitudes that are powerful determinants of future success during their primary school experiences. The general responsibility of a school system is to help each student become an informed, productive and responsible citizen capable of adjusting to life in our changing society.

According to Darling-Hammond (1997), national education:

'...should enable all people to find out and act on who they are, what their passions, gifts, and talents may be, what they care about, and how they want to make a contribution to each other and the world.' (p. 45)

This may be the ideal democratic definition of education as defined by people with individualistic or/and a western nation's perspective. The Asian views have a more collectivistic orientation which highly value being able to work as part of a group. Although, there may be a contrast between the views of individuals within a culture, the members of a collectivistic culture will hold values at the collectivistic end, and each will be at a different point depending on factors such as how closely they identify with the traditional culture, level of education etc.

In fact it is necessary to look closely at what the primary classroom looks like and what goes on in there, especially in context and not only through standardized tests. Although results from standardized test are a broadly accepted way to understand and to acquire information on performance in schools and classrooms, the mandated tests are fast becoming a synonym for merit within the educational system. Such standardized tests are also routinely used by policymakers as a symbolic value to reassure the nervous public that action has been taken; and they are also intended to announce publically the nature of educational priorities for the performance of individual students. Measures that quantify outcomes, for example TIMSS and PISA, are contained in some of the standardised international tests that evaluate the education system world-wide (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development - MEHRD, 2008).

The numbers provided by of such test scores, daily attendance, school rankings, grade levels, reading proficiencies and international test scores measure students, as well as school performance, and offer a picture of the whole education system. Examining the outcomes and judging the schools by tests, may be equally important but, though

necessary, may not be sufficient. As important as it is to know how well students are learning, an examination of achievement scores alone can never reveal how the schools might be improved. Thus, a school is much more than a number and there always remains something that cannot be measured by test scores, even though they still count a great deal in determining the value of a school to the students, faculty and the community. So it is in fact necessary to look closely at what the primary classroom looks like and what goes on in there, especially in context.

Nevertheless, what goes on in the classroom is not necessarily easy to access or to understand, and it is easily misrepresented, leading to myths and assumptions which can neither be denied nor confirmed because of lack of relevant and reliable data. However, we need information on the classroom process, the pedagogy and the idea behind what informs the action of the teacher and the students in the classroom. Most policy makers have ignored this fact, making decisions about the future of education without ever considering the most rudimentary information about what is happening in our classrooms. Jerome Bruner (1996) made this a point in his book 'The culture of education':

'It is somewhat surprising and discouraging how little attention has been paid to the intimate nature of teaching and school learning in the debates on education that have raged over the past decade. These debates have been so focused on performance and standards that they have overlooked the means by which teachers and pupils alike go about their business in real life classrooms- how teachers teach and how pupils learn.' (p. 86)

Thus, classroom analysis can highlight teaching methodologies and learning experience (Alexander, 2000). Without addressing what and how the teachers are teaching, how they are interacting with their students, what is considered important to

teachers, what influences the teachers' and students' encounters, (including the impact of educational practice on students, taking into account the cultural values and historical perspective of both teacher and students,) we cannot understand what is actually going on in the classrooms, especially in an under researched education system like Korea. The various meanings of what goes on in primary classrooms need to be explored. This is because the classroom is part of a wider community of school and beyond, which has cultural practices and social norms. There are activities which happen because they are part of a socio-cultural setting.

At any given time, it is necessary to look at classroom processes, just as it is necessary to monitor their outcomes in terms of tests and examinations. This study covers all aspects of schools, the system, the curriculum, learning and teaching and resources. The nature and purpose of this study is not to be judgemental, but to describe, understand and focus on activities in the classroom, rather than matters relating to actual content and curriculum.

This study establishes the current experiences of teachers and students which will benefit the education community, policy makers, teachers and parents by providing a better understanding of the relationship linking teacher pedagogy and its classroom enactment.

1.2 Definition of terms.

Conceptions have specific meanings that are attached to phenomena which then mediate our responses to situations involving those phenomena. When people from the

other side look across at cultures other than their own, perceptions are likely to be coloured by the presuppositions formed from their own culture. In effect, we view the world through these lenses of our conceptions, interpreting and acting accordingly (Pratt, 1992). Thus, the key terms such as Asia, pedagogy and culture used in this study need to be defined with greater conceptual clarity to provide a stronger framework for this study.

1.2.1 Conceptualizing Asia.

Clarke (2001) argued that how Asia is conceptualised or defined is neither fixed, nor universally agreed upon, and the notion has been manipulated from within and from outside of Asia. Fuller and Clarke (1994) suggested many variations and controversies are found within educational systems in western societies and it could be said that those differences in conceptions and degrees of controversy occurring between western and Asian societies must be greater than those within. Thus, Inoguchi and Newman (1997) argued that the term Asia was originally a concept exclusive to 'western civilization' to point to the differences between the western and the Asian society. In reality, it was suggested, the people of Asia never conceived the idea of Asia (Inoguchi and Newman, 1997).

The Asian continent is enormous, stretching from its western borders, through far east Asia, along South-east Asia, and from there up to East Asia and across towards the South Pacific and Oceania. The Asian continent is comprised of 40 independent countries. In reality Asia is an extremely diverse region characterised by numerous ethnic and cultural distinctions, different languages, religions and values. These differences may be associated with the vast differences in history, tradition and development.

The term Asia or Asian refers generally to people having origins in any of the regions of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent. However, Asian groups are not limited to nationalities, but also include distinctive ethnic features. The potential for confusion is evident as writers are not always explicit as to what they mean by 'East Asia' - whether they are referring to 'East Asia' as including Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan or whether they are also including such 'Southeast Asian' nations as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Some refer to East Asia, or Eastern Asia, as a sub-region of Asia that can be defined in geographical or cultural terms. Nonetheless, an indication of the growing potency of the 'Asia' (or the more specific 'East Asia') idea is to be found in the recurrence of these terms in the titles of relevant journal and magazine articles.

Generally it is said that East Asian societies are strongly influenced by Confucian philosophical foundations and for that reason there are many similarities among these Asian countries. It is unfortunate that Asia is homogenized in the minds of many for these reasons. There may be some underlying consistency among the Asian cultures due to the influence of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism or Hinduism which are undeniable. However, this does not necessarily mean that Asian countries all share the same culture, as distinct differences certainly exist.

Furthermore, it seems that theorists have also focused on the largest region in Asia: China, and has generalised across the above mentioned nations (Cummings, 1996). On the other hand, some theorists have focused on Confucian Asia and studies based on 'Japan and the four tigers' (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) have been

used to highlight their highly developed economic and educational systems. Yet it should be noted that this conceptualisation leaves out mainland China where Confucianism was once prominent (Cummings, 1996). A further limitation of the term Asia is when it is moved past traditional values to focus on the values which had a great influence on institutionalised nations in the colonial eras, and which vary according to their colonial experience, such as British rule of Hong Kong, Japan's rule of Korea and Taiwan and so on. Thus, research has focused on studies with no reference to these cultural and historical differences (Cummings, 1996). It should be noted that although East Asian cultures may share cultural similarities, each nation has its own unique learning and teaching methods as each society evolved separately and at different times. Even when they recognise this, some authors still use generic terms. Thus Nisbett (2003) appealed:

'I wish to apologize in advance to those people who will be upset to see billions of people labeled with the single term "East Asian" and treated as if they are identical. I do not mean to suggest that they are even close to being identical. The cultures and subcultures of the East differ as dramatically from one another as do those of the west. But the broad-brush term "East Asian" can be justified'. (p. xxii)

The term western can be problematic, too, because it can literally denote the entire western hemisphere. But there is no single notion of the west that may be delimited by geographical location or cultural values. The term is seen to be used in opposition to Confucian heritage cultures, and thus, it is intended to reflect the differences in educational norms, practices and stipulations that may be attributed to underlying socio-economic histories. However, 'western' has generally come to apply to institutions that are likely to be located in an economically developed nation whose history is strongly

marked by cultures of European origin and European immigration or settlements and is defined more by its cultural attitudes than by location such as the UK, USA, Australia and Western Europe.

Nonetheless, this study argues that the Asian region is so complex and dynamic, that the term Asia seems increasingly inadequate. However, Asia is likely to continue to be used in this way for the foreseeable future to refer to a geographical location and a cultural unity and, more importantly, to generalise the difference between Asian and western cultures and ways of thinking (Inoguchi and Newman, 1997). Furthermore, whilst it would be ideal to locate the Korean literature in its respective socio-national context, there is insufficient country specific research to provide multiple national strands and the characteristics of Korean culture. It should be noted that in the literature, national context is recognised wherever possible.

1.2.2 Meaning of Culture.

Biggs and Moore (1993) define culture as:

‘the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings which is transmitted from one generation to another’ (p. 24).

Moreover, culture is the social rules, beliefs, attitudes and values that govern how people act and how they define themselves. Cultural groups have fluid boundaries and in any country, almost everyone belongs to a number of different groups and categories of people at the same time. These groups and categories operate at different levels of culture: national, ethnic or religious, gender, generation/ age, social class and

organizational (Hofstede, 1991). Thus, norms, values and beliefs can vary widely across cultures. As such, cultural values and beliefs, including the culture of a nation, are not easy concepts to explore. However, Hofstede (1991) suggests that despite such complexities, and despite the similarities that exist between intra-country social characteristics, the inter-country differences are substantial and significant.

Kroeber and Kluckholme (1952) suggested that culture is made up of general values which generate specific norms, which in turn guide people to act in ways that are congruent with the needs of the social structure in which they operate. These ideas, values, beliefs and norms of a group are profoundly involved in motivating people to act in certain ways. Thus, values are considered to be subjective, and are aligned with beliefs. It is the assumptions or convictions that a person holds to be true which are the internal forces that guide the action of individuals and groups, while norms are the rules of behaviour in specific situations. And while norms, values and beliefs are formal, they are also informal, as are the external forces that guide them.

Hofstede (1991) developed a framework for measuring cultural differences based in forty countries. This study identified systematic differences and three cultural 'layers': the basic norms and values shared by all human beings; the collective beliefs and values shared by particular groups of people; and an individual's unique experience of people and things. These social beliefs, norms and values are the behavioural expectations of a culture, and are usually the unconscious everyday activities about beliefs, for example, about the nature of the environment or the nature of human relationships. They are the

basic taken for granted ways of thinking that are so deeply engrained in us that we are rarely conscious that they are beliefs (Hofstede, 1991).

Moreover, culture cannot be understood outside of the historical development of the political and social fabric of society. Culture, therefore, is not merely transmitted, but it is created, and it is historical in that it is related to the past, but it is also functional as it is related to the present. Morrish (1976) argued:

'it is a configuration of the total social inheritance and way of life,' cited in Gibson (1976, p. 12).

Culture is then produced, but it is also subject to change. Because culture is the product of a group, cultures are controlled by and control themselves through information flow. Thus, culture shapes behaviour and situations in ways not determined by biology or environment. As Kroeber and Kluckholme (1952) state:

'culture is an intervening variable between human organism and the environment'. (p. 186)

Therefore, an understanding of culture is not simply the acknowledgement of difference, but rather, an understanding of differences as seen in the use of materials and the relationship between behaviour, belief, the values of religion, and language, and the way these have influenced society (Kroeber and Kluckholme, 1952). Thus, culture is the framework through which we experience and understand the world around us. Culture contains meanings, and these meanings are the means through which people in the group understand and make sense of and respond intellectually and emotionally to the world around them. Culture is comprised of parts in a unique arrangement and inter-relation,

and is in a constant state of dynamic activity which brings about new entities. Identifying its nature and characteristics is necessary before one can define and understand the idea of culture and its role in society.

1.2.3 Definition of pedagogy.

In Korean, the term pedagogy may be interpreted to mean studies of education and teaching methods. Pedagogy is translated as ‘education’, ‘teaching’, ‘teaching profession’ and ‘studies of education’ (Naver dictionary Korean translation). Van Manen (1990) also suggests that the term pedagogy has gradually turned into a fashionable word and lost its original meaning. As such, pedagogy is also seen in Korea together in connection with words like ‘piano pedagogy’, ‘language pedagogy’ and ‘western pedagogy’. However, in general, researchers in Korea have applied the term to describe and represent the teaching and study of education. Subsequently, Mortimore and Watkins (1999) defined pedagogy as:

‘any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another’
(p. 17),

and Alexander (2000) defined pedagogy as:

‘...the act of teaching together with the ideas, values and collective histories which inform, shape and explain that act’ (p. 540).

This demonstrates that education and pedagogy are not exclusive but complementary. Hinchliff (2001) illustrated in his analysis that the distinction between education and pedagogy is not easy to make. He stated that:

‘pedagogy views learning instrumentally’ whereas ‘education views learning for its own sake’ (p. 35).

Thus, education seems to be connected to learning and to the students, whereas pedagogy is connected with the actual act of teaching, with the purpose of developing the well informed person. Thus, the word pedagogy encompasses all the instructional ideas, strategies, skills and practices that teachers can use in order to affect student outcomes. It includes the ways in which teachers interact with a student; that is how teachers question and respond to these questions, bring into play students’ ideas and react to students’ diverse backgrounds and interests. It also comprises the social and intellectual climate that teachers seek to create, coupled with the types of learning that they set out to promote. In addition, it incorporates the decisions they make about framing the content around a series of tasks to be completed or as key ideas and skills that are revisited and built upon, how they link and sequence activities and how and what they assess. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions which comprise teaching. Therefore, pedagogy is highly saturated with the cultural values and history of the society and community in which it is situated.

Therefore, this study assumes that pedagogy relies on learning for legitimization, and that the term ‘pedagogy’ includes act and discourse, teacher and learner.

Correspondingly, pedagogical practices and learners are located within their cultural environments, reciprocally and dynamically influencing each other. To understand people and cultural context we must understand their thoughts, beliefs and values, as well as their physical environment.

1.3 The researcher's perspective.

Researchers attempt to make sense of, or provide an interpretation of their research study, and thus, it is important for researchers to clarify their personal motivation for their research especially for those utilising qualitative methodologies that require reflectivity (Creswell, 1994).

Each person, in this case the researcher's account of the world, is unique. Each research investigation reflects what we expect to find, what we are looking for and how we perceive our role. What the researcher offers is an account which can be examined critically and systematically because the means by which it was generated is clearly articulated.

In order to clarify their role in a study, researchers often position themselves as either 'insiders' or 'outsiders' to a research study. Generally, the insider position involves researchers who seek to study a group to which they belong, while in outsider positions the researcher does not belong to the group under study (Breen, 2007). It is suggested that each status carries with it certain advantages and disadvantages (Bridge, 2002). Insiders may have a deep understanding of the world they work in, and what works and what doesn't. However, the insiders may be too biased to recognise the truth of the matter. The insider researcher may be too embedded to see ways of getting out and too invested to give up favoured ways of seeing things; therefore they are unable to establish reflective distance in order to see new discrepancies. On the other hand, outsider researchers may have to ask and seek questions that have not been asked before, or notice or hear things in the fieldwork phase that insiders have not noticed or heard. They may come up with

novel ways of explaining things to show things in a new light. Thus, outsider researchers may act as a catalyst for change, and loosen the established pattern. Outsider researchers may also be way off mark and report on thing that insiders have long known about. Thus, outsider researchers may misunderstand and under-represent situations.

More recent discussions have highlighted the complexity inherent in either approach, and have acknowledged that the boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated. Bridge (2002) points out that it is not always obvious who is inside and who is outside a given group, and that a particular individual may have personal characteristics that make them partly an insider and partly an outsider to the group. In addition, an insider researcher may become an outsider in his or her own community through the act or process of researching it. Alternatively a researcher may start off as an outsider when starting the research, and change more to an insider during the research phase (Bridges, 2002).

Mercer goes further, to propose that the insider and outsider dichotomy is a continuum with multiple dimensions, in which the researcher constantly moves backwards and forwards depending on the time, location and participant and topic involved (Mercer, 2007). Mercer also suggests that the boundaries between insider and outsider research should be regarded as permeable, involving potentially multiple identities.

Thus, categorizing into an insider and outsider dichotomy is too simplistic for this study and neither term adequately captures the role I occupied throughout the research. I consider myself to be neither an insider nor outsider to the group that grew up in the

Korean society and attended Korean national schools whilst I was undertaking this study. To present the study in terms of either approach is thus overly simplistic. Although at times I may be closer to the insider perspective, and at other times closer to the outsider position, I cannot choose one position over the other, since I consider myself to occupy both positions.

It is here that I come to discuss my position in the study. Membership of a group or culture does not denote complete sameness within that group. I am a 1.5 generation child. My family and I left Korea when I was a child and immigrated to Australia. I spoke Korean to my parents and English to my friends and other family members like siblings. As a 1.5 generation child, I had some access to the native culture but was surrounded by the Australian (western) culture. I found myself assimilating to the new culture as the dominant culture in the country I was living in. Baker (2004) suggests that the world of immigrants is a dynamically changing society with a mixture of many different values. Some insist on a thorough acculturation based on the western way of thinking. Others argue for a firm preservation of their parents' culture, in my case Korean. And there are others who favour a happy balance between the two. I learned the Korean language as well as the cultural aspects of Korea but also tried to assimilate to western ways. Accordingly, as a result I take neither insider nor outsider position, but the one 'in the middle'. Therefore I must conclude that I hold the in between perspective in this study.

The strengths and limitations of both insider and outsider positions in this research are explained. The advantage of the insider researcher is that I am part of the culture under study. As an insider, I share characteristics of the culture with the participants

under this study; understanding the Korean language and native appearance gave immediate access to people and contact which put me in the insider position. I was not foreign, or a stranger to them, and did not stand out. While visiting each school and interacting with the population, I had the advantage of being able to immerse myself in the environment. I had an understanding of the group's culture and the ability to interact naturally with the group and its members. In addition, my knowledge of the language was a great advantage in carrying out this study. Whilst language may have normal structure, which can be translated and understood by others; it consists of far more than just words in the dictionary. There are idioms, jargon and, furthermore, every social group has its own private codes, which are all benefits of an insider researcher.

As for the outsider researcher's position, I did not share similar experience, role and membership to the participants and did not share in the past history of the participants within the research area and culture. This is because I had no knowledge or experience of the Korean education system as I had been educated in the Australian system. This put me in the outsider's stance, meaning that the researcher can view each situation more objectively. Pugh, Mitchell, and Brooks (2000) suggest that despite emphasis on the differences between these supposedly diametrically opposed positions and their underlying epistemologies, the research partnership between an insider and an outsider balances out the advantages of both positions, while minimising the disadvantages of each.

1.4 Limitation and boundaries.

It is useful to identify, from the outset, the limits of this study. Understanding its limitations can improve the clarity of what the investigation attempted to accomplish, as well as not accomplish, while it indicates the findings' limitations. Accordingly, this section identifies some of these limitations.

First, while the purpose of this study was to increase research knowledge of interplay between pedagogy and cultural factors within Korea, the limitation of the sample constrains the generalization of the findings. The research field for this study is primary state schools in Korea; however, it focuses on schools in the Seoul region. A study of the whole of Korea would lie beyond the scope of this study, and it therefore concentrates on the largest city in one area. Seoul is the capital, and the largest city in Korea, a megacity with a population of over ten million which is one of the largest cities in the world (Brinkhoff, 2007). Although Seoul is the largest city in Korea, the findings may not represent the whole of Korea.

Second, a study of pedagogy and culture in any nation may seem complex.

Alexander (2000) suggests, in relation to his studies, that:

'nobody embarking on a study of education in other cultures ought to do so without being acutely aware of how little, despite their best endeavours they end up knowing' (p. 3).

Thus, it is beyond the scope of this study to explore deeply the years of educational history, as well as the cultural underpinning of the nation. Nonetheless, this study is an

attempt to reveal some clear and pervading commonalities that are shared among the majority of the Korean population, of schools and the classrooms.

As for literature, an attempt is made to locate specific Korean literature on the culture and pedagogy in which this study is based in its respective socio-national context. Insufficient research has concentrated particularly on the nation of Korea and its education system. Literature on Asian, Japanese and Chinese countries, and countries with a Confucian heritage background, may provide some insight and supplementary material on Korea. Nevertheless, the lack of material on Korea may help to identify contradictions and ambiguities, and even fill in some of the gaps that are inherently part of this thesis' construction.

Finally, this study was conducted in a particular cultural context and a direct measure of the impact of cultural variables on any individual teacher lies beyond its scope. Instead, emphasis is placed on finding patterns of perspectives on classroom pedagogy and national culture in which individuals are socialized to think, choose and act. Furthermore, this study focuses on how the concept of teaching and learning is actually constructed by the students and the teacher. Hence, although an examination of the actuality teaching is relevant, the teaching and learning content is out of range of this study and it must be left for further research.

On a positive note, my experience of both cultures may enhance and complement the study by enriching knowledge when interpretation is needed. As mentioned, being bi-cultural may provide a strength and can facilitate the study through ease of access and by highlighting situations which local researchers may have taken for granted.

1.5 Overview of the thesis.

This thesis is organised into five parts. The first part, chapter 1, has introduced and provided an overview of the thesis, by introducing the topic and its importance.

Definitions, limitations and statement of significance have been established, in order to place boundaries on this study. Specifically, the researcher's perspectives are stated, to clarify what the research seeks to accomplish by setting out the framework of the study.

Part two includes chapter's 2, 3 and 4: the literature review. Chapter 2 provides the general background information to make sense of the whole context. The historical development of Korean education to the present system and the religious impact and contemporary changes that have affected Korean society so far are presented. Chapter 3 explores the literature on the historical and cultural learner in context. The chapter starts with relevant studies regarding Asian learning styles, discussing the stereotypical and divergent views and different concepts that describe the Asian learner. The chapter then moves on to the conception of teaching styles and identifies different cultural views of teaching in the Asian classroom. Chapter 4 explores literature on Korean cultural characteristics, specifically the effects of Korean culture and Korean language on behaviour. It also discusses the Korean traditional values and beliefs in the context of the behavioural norms called *cheong*, *chemyeon*, *nunchi* and *hyodo* and the working dynamics of society. This chapter also includes an examination of Korean and the language structure of Korean including non-verbal aspects of the language and the conception of *uri*, meaning self. This section concludes the review of literature and presents the three research questions.

Part three includes Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8: the methodology. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 provide a rationale for the methodology for focus group interviews, questionnaire and observation/follow-up interviews respectively used in this study. Chapter 5 starts by describing the theoretical framework underpinning the study and then provides the overview of the selection and implementation of the mixed method methodology. This is followed by the methodological decisions taken in the focus group interviews. Chapter 6 and 7 discusses the methodological decisions taken for the questionnaire and observation/follow-up interviews respectively. Each of these chapters includes explaining the reasons for the choice of methodology at each stage and identifying issues that it will be necessary to address in data collection and analysis. Chapter 8 discusses the reliability, validity and the ethical issues concerning this study.

Part four includes Chapters 8, 9 and 10: the results. These chapters start with a description of the development of each research instrument, selection of samples, response rate and details of method of analysis for focus group, questionnaire and observation/follow-up respectively. Each chapter then continues with the presentation of the findings.

Part five includes Chapters 11 and 12, the discussion and conclusion to the study. Chapter 11 presents the discussion based on the findings from Chapters 8, 9 and 10. Discussion focuses on interpreting and outlining the implications, interpretations and significance of findings in this study. Significant points of interest are identified. The focus is on discussing the results in light of the research questions identified in Chapter 4. Lastly Chapter 12 consolidates and summarizes the findings by identifying and reflecting

on key points in the study. Further this chapter concludes the study with a discussion of the effectiveness of the methodology in answering the research questions, the limitations of the study and an outline of the impact of the study and the implications for further research.

-Part 2- Literature review

Chapter 2 - Background information

Chapter 3 - Teaching and learning approaches

Chapter 4 - Korean cultural characteristics

Chapter 2: Background Information.

2.0 Introduction.

The history of education in Korea is long and diverse, due to constant invasions by foreign powers such as China and Japan, and the American (US) influence since the Korean War. The education system has constantly been changed by external forces and was influenced by each social, political and economic development. This chapter provides background information to this study. General information is needed to provide fundamental background information about the subject under study. It includes the historical evolution of the education system based on the changes in economic development. Different religious beliefs and their impact on Korean society are also included. The contemporary changes seen in society are also briefly mentioned.

2.1 Historical development.

Historically, there are three phases of the Korean Dynasties. The dynasties were called '*Three Kingdom*' (37 BC- 668 AD), '*Koryo Dynasty*' (918-1392AD) and '*Yi Dynasty*' also called '*Choson*' era (1392-1910). Buddhism and Confucianism were first introduced into Korea from China. There were numerous cultural and political exchanges between China and Korea. Korea Education and Research Information Service- KERIS (2006) suggested:

'Buddhism has met the spiritual needs of the people and Confucianism has served as the glue to ensure the cohesiveness of family and socioeconomic hierarchies' (p. 6).

The education system is deeply embedded in the religious and philosophical teaching of Buddhism and Confucianism, of which aspects can be traced in current Korean culture today.

According to KERIS (2006), formal education in Korea began during the '*Three Kingdom*' (37 BC- 668 AD), under the influence of the Chinese education system. Buddhism gradually declined during the *Choson* Era, which turned to Confucianism as a source of basic principles for national politics, ethics and social institution. Historically, with the adoption of the Confucian political system during the late-*Koryo* (935-1392) and early-*Choson* periods, individuals of merit were selected through a nation-wide civil examination (*kwa-keo*). The civil service examination in the mid-tenth century set the pattern for educational reform through its dominant role in preparing young men for public service. During this time, the central government began to dispatch scholars to provincial areas, to implement education for local residents. This civil service examination continues to be seen in present Korea, and also selects not only men but females for high government positions. Confucian ideology, and the examination system as a means of social selection, resulted in formal education becoming a preoccupation (Seth, 2005). Consequently, education in traditional Korea was valued as both a means of self-cultivation and a way of achieving status and power (as discussed further in Section 3.1.7).

The first school, in the modern sense of the word, was established in 1886 and employed American missionary teachers who taught English with the aid of interpreters. These schools were established by western Christian missionaries and contributed greatly to the early development of modern education in Korea. During this period numerous schools were established and founded in major cities. The 1900s also saw an increase of private secondary schools founded by Koreans who were wealthy aristocrats. However, the development of modern education was disrupted during the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea (1910-1945). During this time, the number of public schools increased substantially as the new Japanese administration introduced universal education patterned on the Japanese school system. However, schooling for Korean children was limited as the six year elementary system was reduced to three years and Korean children were only educated in technical subjects. Although, modern elementary education was set up, the education was designed to assimilate Koreans and to keep them subordinate in all ways to ethnic Japanese (Sorenson, 1994). Education during the Japanese colonization was viewed primarily as an instrument of ‘Imperial Citizen Forming’ (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology- MEST, 2009). Japanese control aimed to obliterate the cultural identity of Korea (KERIS, 2006). Thus, Koreans had limited access to educational opportunity at all levels during this time. As a result, 80% of the South Korean population was illiterate (Paik, 2001).

By the end of thirty years of harsh colonization, there was chaos in the education system, with a lack of trained teachers and resources. With Korea’s independence from Japanese occupation, a new government was established in 1948. Korea’s liberation from Japanese rule in 1945 ushered in a new era which saw a dramatic shift in the

political system from a colonial to a democratic system (KERIS, 2006). From 1945-1949, the foundation and goals of the Korean education system were developed, to build an independent nation and to eliminate any legacy of the colonial occupation. In 1949, the Basic Education Law was established, which required a unified system of six-three-three: six years of primary school, three years of lower secondary school, and three years of upper secondary school (KERIS, 2006). The opportunity for education, which had been limited to small and privileged elites, reached the masses.

However, educational development slowed due to disruption of the nation by the devastating civil Korean War: from 1950-1953. Korea suffered the further agony of national division of North (communist) and South (democratic) which is as yet unresolved. With the assistance of the government of the United States of America, the education system expanded and was rebuilt. As a result of the withdrawal of the Japanese and their education system, all new textbooks and curricula were re-developed. The collapse of the system led the Korean government to take a centralised approach to administration which has come to be one of its defining features and sets it apart from education ministries in the majority of western countries. The dictatorial government had central control over all decision making processes on society and education. Uniformity was regarded as the major characteristic of the educational paradigm during this period. The 1960s were known as the ‘decade of development’, in which the economy and educational system developed rapidly (KERIS, 2006; p. 30). The growing economy needed technology and trained manpower to modernize its educational system. After the civil war, educational facilities remained ill-equipped and inadequate even until the

1970s. The educational planning in the 1970s started focusing on ‘citizenship education, loyalty, patriotism, self-reliance, and anti-communism’ (Sorenson, 1994; p. 10).

The literacy rate, which was 22% in 1945, reached 92% in 1973 (Lee, 1981). The rapid growth in student population resulted in overcrowded classrooms and shortage of qualified teachers and education facilities. There was a further expansion and modernization of physical facilities and an improvement in the socio-economic status of teachers. As a result student numbers dropped to 34.8 per class in 1990 (KERIS, 2006). Overcrowded schools were divided into smaller ones and the double shift system of classes was terminated. While the 1980s focused on the quality of education and the autonomy of teachers, the 1990s placed emphasis on preparing the individual for the future. Ellinger and Beckaham (1997) summed up Korea’s economic development and educational achievement:

‘At the heart of this remarkable achievement is Korea’s education system, which has been the major source of trained labour in the various fields and at skill levels needed for economic development’ (p. 624).

2.2 Contemporary Education system.

In order to clearly understand the contemporary Korean education system, this section begins by introducing the context of the education system from a contemporary structural point of view. Watkins (2007) argued that educational research needs to be conducted in context. Examining the educational structure of the organisation of the school, of the teachers, students and other staff will reveal certain assumptions about the education system.

The enrolment rates in 2000 were 98.5% for primary school, 99.1% for middle school, 96.4% for high school and 80.5% for four year higher education. The literacy rate in 2000 was nearly 100%, as contrasted with less than 30% in the late 1930s (UNESCO, 2000). In line with this remarkable economic growth, the Korean economy became the eleventh largest in the world (UNESCO, 2000). The 1986 declaration of educational democratization detailed the goals of the ‘democratic education movement’ which aimed to create an autonomous educational structure and an opportunity for all Koreans to receive an education. The term democratic education differs from American educational theory which is aimed at giving a child more freedom and responsibility, thus promoting individualism. The term ‘democratic’ used in Korea is more about the decentralization of controls from the education bureaucracy.

Seth (2002) described democratic education as:

‘...a decentralisation of educational administration, the granting of greater autonomy to individual schools in decision making and a modification of the curriculum so that it conformed to the norms of a democratic society’ (p. 230).

The ‘democratic education’ was made accessible to everyone after the prolonged exclusive access by the elite class and limitations stipulated by the Japanese government during the Japanese occupation. Koreans have made phenomenal progress in ensuring that education is available to all of the population. The democratic education became a mechanism for the formation, and legitimization, of new social classes, by offering some chance of upward mobility even for people of the humblest origin. However, structurally, the Korean education system is very rigid and closed. The present structure of education in Korea, which was formulated in 1949, is based on concepts drawn from the American

education system, superimposed on a combination of the old Japanese system, traditional Confucian schools, and missionary schools (KERIS, 2006). It is said to be modelled mostly on the American system but the similarity is very superficial with the American system being much more decentralised and open. In addition, the interpersonal relationships within the two systems are very different as well as methods of teaching and studying, although this will be discussed further in more detail below. The Korean system remains very hierarchical with the central government governing the behaviour of all institutions in the country.

The national primary education system is both compulsory and free. Students attend school for 220 days per year. The primary curriculum consists of nine principal subjects: moral education, Korean language, social studies, mathematics, science, physical education, music, fine arts, and practical arts. English-language instruction now begins in the third grade, so that children can start learning English in a relaxed atmosphere through conversational exchange, rather than through rote learning of grammatical rules, as is still the practice in many middle and high schools. Public education in Korea is guided by the national curriculum. The national curriculum dictates the textbook, teacher's role, student activities and classroom interaction. There is a teacher's guide which contains an explanation of the national curriculum and approaches to teaching and the structure of textbooks, the usage of audio and electronic resources, and a procedural guide for each lesson.

It is suggested that there are differences in the structural formation of the education systems in each nation; generally East Asian school governance includes strategic

planning by a centralized national board of directors, with nationwide uniform curriculum and testing programmes (Haynes and Chalker, 1998; Morris, 1996). On the other hand, educational decisions are generally more locally controlled in the western nations, and more student centred, and therefore more decentralized (Hahn, 2001).

The administrative system in Korean education is highly centralized, responsible for sixteen city and provincial offices and 182 county education offices. According to MEST statistics (2010), there are 589 primary schools in Seoul consisting of 29,004 teachers and 598,514 students with an average of twenty nine students per class.

From 1990 to the present time, changes have been implemented in the education system as a response to the impact of globalization. Globalization, an important characteristic within the contemporary economic environment, has resulted in significant changes to individual nations in terms of economic development strategies undertaken by national governments. The influence of globalization within the contemporary economic environment has resulted in significant changes to individual nations in terms of development strategies undertaken by national governments. In order to provide qualitative development and promote a consumer oriented education system, the concepts of localization, decentralization and autonomy guided the reforms. As a result, there has been a move in some Asian countries to decentralise education systems in a similar way to some western school systems, (for example, schools in America, Australia, Europe etc.,) in an effort to give more autonomy to the local authorities and to the schools and to provide a more creative environment. In this context, it may seem surprising that England, in the late 1980's, was moving away from a decentralised to a centralised

curriculum and assessment system to provide continuity and consistency between schools.

However, from 1991, the Korean government implemented gradual decentralisation, where control gradually moved from the national level to the local level and then to individual schools, in an effort to increase efficiency, flexibility, accountability and the responsiveness of educational development to changing circumstances and, thus, to increase the quality of the education system. Each individual school is now under the governance of the local government authorities (Kim and Ryu, 2004) in an effort to decentralize the schools and promote school autonomy. By 1997 it was reported that 80% of national primary, middle and high schools had established school councils consisting primarily of principals, teachers, parents, community leaders, alumni, and educational specialists (Kim, 2000).

Additionally, the most recent curriculum extends these changes to increase autonomy at local school level, to ensure the use of technology in instruction and administration, to cater for more creativity in the classrooms, and thus, to increase self-directed learning. The curriculum changes were intended to loosen the rigid and centralised curriculum framework. Specifically, teachers are now encouraged to be directly and actively involved in the decision and planning process for the curriculum. Local offices of education and schools should establish systematic and concrete guidelines for the organisation and implementation of the curriculum and develop individualised guidelines which are customised for local needs and circumstances (MEHRD, 2004).

However, with the influence of an influx of western ideologies, the education system has exhibited an interesting mixture of different, even conflicting, ideologies. Shin (2003), illustrated the unique trend that one can find in contemporary Korea, namely the mixture of nationalism and globalization. The nationalist nature of Confucian philosophy continues to stand firm as the foundation of Korean culture and as an influence on the structure and human relationships in society. This is also seen in the education sector. Yet western democratic ideologies, including individualism, have been introduced in the content of the national curriculum.

As viewed in the latest seventh curriculum change, the goals for primary school education illustrated these conflicts; their goals include:

‘to help students develop the basic ability to recognize and solve problems in their daily lives and to provide them with the ability to express their own feelings and ideas in diverse ways’ while also ‘to develop the right attitude for understanding and appreciating Korea’s unique tradition and culture’
(MEHRD, 2004; p. 10).

2.2.1 Centralization qualities still persist due to traditional culture.

Although efforts have been made to decentralize the Korean education system, addressed in the above section, mixed ideologies have influenced the contemporary education system.

When considering the structure of the education system it can be seen that it is still essentially centralised. At the head of the Korean system is the Ministry of Education, whose main function is policy making and evaluation. The national curriculum guidelines

and assessment and evaluation were, and are still, developed and monitored by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) which oversees the education of children from kindergarten through to high school. The national curriculum and guidelines state the goals for all schools and classrooms as seeking to create a national identity and sense of purpose through the education system (MEHRD, 2001). The educational goals seen in the national policy, national curriculum and assessment guidelines clearly state intentions and priorities, setting out the language and culture in which the schools and classrooms should operate. The central government also sets the criteria for the development of textbooks and instructional materials. Thus, nearly all primary school textbooks are government copyrighted, and are distributed to all schools.

Further, central control is also seen in the allocation of the educational budget, despite the fact that all educational funds are handled by the local educational government, owing to decentralisation of the education system. Further, the local government oversees the function of each school. However, it is the central government that sets the rules and regulations for local authority and individual schools to follow. The local educational ministries have been shown to follow the strict regulations and guidelines set out in the national policy. In other words, local governments are given funds, but clear rules and regulation on how to spend these funds are set out by the central government. Furthermore, a small part of the budget, specifically 4% of 32.2 billion US dollars which amounts to 1.1 billion US dollars, is retained, and local government may apply to the central government for further funding when there is an unexpected emergency (MEST, 2010). Teachers are managed and controlled by central authority as Korean teachers in schools are all public employees of the national

government with uniform salary scales and required qualifications. The teachers' qualifications and salary are thus determined by the central authority. Therefore, this body governs the behaviour of all institutions in the country, and this is discernible within the educational institutions themselves.

Schools and local governing bodies are encouraged to be actively involved in the decision and planning process; however, they cannot be fully autonomous, the reason being the concrete central guidelines and established systematic central control of the education system.

2.2.2 Excessive testing.

According to reports on various international tests, Korea's performance in international league tables of achievement is consistently high. However there are constant criticisms of the education system and its excessive testing of students, which this section addresses.

From an international viewpoint, the high results speak for themselves, as seen in the successful positioning in international test results, which are very much admired within Korea, with Korea being among the top ranking countries (OECD, 2001 & 2009). For example, it is reported that Korean students achieved the highest mean scores in mathematics and science in the International Assessment of Education Progress (IAEP) administered by the education testing service of nineteen countries in 1991. Additionally the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) showed that fifteen year old Korean students ranked first, second and sixth in science, mathematics and reading

respectively among thirty two participating OECD members (OECD, 2001).

Furthermore, in the PISA 2009 survey Korean students ranked second in all areas among sixty five participating members (OECD, 2009).

Even with these outstanding results, the general public has criticised rather than praised the national education system (Kim, J; 2004). Kim's (2004) study identified a number of difficult tasks that the Korean education is challenged with, for instance to prepare children for challenging economic circumstances while reinforcing and defining Korean identity and at the same time providing a means of measuring an individual student's abilities. Seth (2002) claimed that the complex interaction of traditional Confucian attitudes and new egalitarian ideas introduced from the West has resulted in what may be described by Koreans as 'education fever'.

The most common criticisms of the Korean education system surround its excessive focus on testing, its intense competition and the tendency to discourage creativity in favour of rote learning. A further term used is that of 'examination hell' (Sorensen, 1994). 'Examination hell' describes the intensity of focus students are faced with in schools. Standardized testing is utilized to compare the accumulated knowledge of students with their peers. Even in modern times, educational attainment is accepted as one of the fairest measures of a person's worth. It is an effective form of gauging student progress at many different levels, and is a helpful factor in determining the quality of a programme and the standards of a school. It sometimes seems that the entire Korean education system of schooling is geared entirely to tests, and according to Modello

(2008), success in Korea is often defined by the ability to pass exams which are more tests of will than of knowledge.

Principals and administrators are concerned with how their schools compare competitively against others. In junior high schools, students achieving the best scores are sent to specialized charter schools for a more advanced education in technology, science and other pursuits, determining early in life the course of their career. Thus, students are determined to work hard as the final examination determines their final career and lifestyle choice. College entrance depends solely upon ranking highly in objectively graded examinations, and graduating from a highly ranked university is seen as a key to obtaining a good job, impressive salary, social status and even a good marriage (Lee and Larson, 2000).

Furthermore, South Korea's university system is characterized by a hierarchy structured by informal rankings, and graduating from a prestigious and influential university has great benefits because of the power of informal networking among its alumni. Graduates from SKY (Seoul National University, Korea University and Yonsei University: the top three ranking universities in Korea,) are given priority in appointment to high status jobs. They are the first choice of recruitment sites for many leading companies. Lee and Brinton (1996) found that private social capital did not lead to the best jobs in Korea, but the universities that students attended introduced them to future employers. In addition, the recruitment rate of graduates from top universities into top firms was over twice as great as their representation in the cohort of graduates. Apart from the fact that graduates from prestigious universities enjoy a large number of benefits

with the high probability of large-firm employment after graduation or to be employed in the primary sector, there are also economic and social benefits.

Because of the importance of tests at all levels of the school system, an incredible amount of pressure falls on the students. Parents' desire for educational success for their children is profound and has a huge impact on their actual behaviour towards their children. As a result of pressure on students to perform well in examinations, students increasingly receive private tutoring and/or attend afterschool private academies. It is reported that 72.6% of all students participated in private tutoring in 2003. More specifically, 83.1% of elementary pupils, 75.3% of junior high pupils and 56.4% of high school pupils were reported to have participated in private tutoring (MEST, 2009). All children are supposed to work hard and thus the heavy demand for academic excellence on children showed a negative effect on the children's psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Whether it is the influence of cultural factors (as discussed in Section 4.1) or Confucian beliefs (in Section 2.3.3), that emphasise the idea of effort and hard work, South Korea has been ranked the world's hardest-working nation with the average employee working 2,357 hours per year. According to a 2009 study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) comparing working hours between OECD members, on average South Koreans work the longest hours per year. This work ethic is also reflected in students' hours of study (OECD, 2009).

In an 'average week', an average South Korean school student (twelve years old or younger) spends more hours during and after school compared to students, for instance,

in the US. Specifically, they spend four times as long studying at home as their US counterparts (KNSO, 1999; Hofferth and Sandberg, 2000). Table 2.1 shows a comparison of an average student in the US and an average student in South Korea.

Table 2.1 Comparison of students' allocated time (hour, minutes)		
Variables	US students	Korean students
Sleeping	67.39	57.17
Eating	7.25	9.27
Personal care	7.57	6.18
Household work	6.09	1.38
In school	33.37	36.31
Studying after school	3.40	15.52

(KNSO, 1999; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2000).

Expenditure on private tutoring in 2003 amounted to 12.4 billion US dollars, equivalent to about 56% of the national budget on education (Choi, et al; 2003). Furthermore, many parents are sending their children to other countries for their education because of doubt over the quality of domestic education. The number of Korean students in the US alone tops 100,000, and accounts for a full 10% of all foreign students in the country (Mondello, 2008).

Controversies in the current education system have been explored in this section, many of them arising from the impact of political, social and economic change. The following section explores literature on implementation of policies, practices and wider trends in borrowing and adapting foreign policies.

2.2.3 Implementation of policies and practices.

The Korean education system has seen many policy changes and educational reforms within the last decade, and has been revised seven times since the end of the Korean War in 1953 (MEST, 2009). Each major change has been made in response to the change in politics, the economy and the recent effect of globalisation.

As a result, the current ‘Seventh National Curriculum’ was created in 1997 (Korea Educational Development Institute - KEDI, 1998) and has been gradually implemented since the year 2000 (Kim, H; 2004). According to MEHRD (2001), the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development issued the Seventh National Curriculum, a comprehensive plan to reform all aspects and levels of education, with the goal of creating a dynamic, flexible workforce of highly-skilled, creative individuals. Furthermore, the national curriculum has constantly been amended in an effort to address the specific needs of the ‘Knowledge-Based Economy’:

‘...to cultivate creative, autonomous, and self-driven human resources who will lead the era’s developments in information, knowledge and globalization’
(MEHRD, 2005; p. 1).

Looking at the world-wide trend towards the intensification of higher standards in education, national assessment has centred on achievement levels. Thus, standardised tests are seen as way to hold schools accountable. The BSAT (Basic Scholastic Ability Test) is one of these tests. It was developed from the national curriculum to evaluate both students and teachers against national curriculum standards (MEHRD, 2004). Previously, schools used norm-referenced evaluation where students were ranked to the average total score they received, by combining grades from all subjects. It was believed, when

implementing the new curriculum, that creating a ‘good school system’ not only meant achieving higher test scores, but also reforming curriculum and teaching methods to reflect ‘real life’ (MEHRD, 2005).

When describing the structure of the education system, there has been a move in Asian countries to decentralise the education system, in an effort to give more autonomy to the local authorities and to the schools. It is believed that under decentralization, people have more control and can contribute more. According to Kim (2000), it is seen as a major policy for increasing efficiency, flexibility, accountability and responsiveness of schools. In the 1980s, Japan and Hong Kong initiated reforms for the deregulation of school administration. It was proposed that power be taken from central bureaus, and delegated to local institutions (Muto, 2000). As a result, the principles of decentralization, privatization and marketization were employed as essential strategies for education reform. A similar trend towards educational decentralization occurred in Korea. In the 1990s, the Ministry for Education in Korea ordered all primary and secondary schools to pilot the establishment of school councils, to promote school autonomy in the contemporary education system. As a result, (as noted on p. 61), by 1997, 80% of national primary, middle, and high schools had established school councils consisting primarily of principals, teachers, parents, community leaders, alumni, and educational specialists (Kim, 2000). In short, Korea, like other Asian countries, has followed the international trend of educational decentralization that emerged in the 1980’s.

Korea has undergone dramatic changes economically affecting society, culture and the politics of the nation, especially the education system. In the midst of all the growth

and expansion from colonisation, wars and establishment of democratic government, there were developments and changes due to globalisation and modernisation. The national education system has been:

‘destabilised by these external pressures and the internal pressures of meeting the demands of a post-modern society’ (Seth, 2002; p. 8).

Accordingly, it is suggested that there are two forces which place a strain on the modern education system in Korea.

One is the society’s emphasis on *Koreanness*, nationalism and equal opportunity. The other is the focus on the development, progress and advancement to the standard of leading nations and world class institutions.

Mondello (2008) states:

‘The education system needs to prepare the population for the future challenging economic circumstances while reinforcing and defining Korean identity while at the same time providing a means of measuring individual students’ abilities’. (p. 4)

The interplay of the opposite forces, when implanting new ideas, makes the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology a ‘battle ground’, the struggle to foster the ‘best and brightest’ and also:

‘raising the standards of education for all is played out’ (Kim, 2004 cited in Mondello, 2008; p. 2).

Thus, as illustrated above, the Korean national school system has been confronted with a range of contradictory requirements, and it is in this context that recent education

reform policies have been implemented (Kim, J; 2004). It is suggested that these aspects of the education reform create ‘frustrated teachers’ by increasing their workload while reducing their role to that of a ‘mere technician’. This has been said to:

‘render teachers powerless in their efforts to overcome standardized teaching’
(Kim, J; 2004; p. 127).

The extremely standardized education system is limited in many ways, such as the teaching style, and teachers have suggested they could not change even if they wanted to (Kim, J; 2004). Forrester (2000) argued that recent education reforms, which intended to raise the standard of school education with more complex requirements from outside school, produced the opposite results, namely a limitation in teachers’ professional commitment and decreased dedication to their students.

Kim (2003), labelled the failure to implement educational policies as ‘school collapse’ (p. 1), and points to concern about reduced level of students’ interest and enthusiasm for learning from school materials and a lack of student involvement. Kim, (2003) argued, the high numbers in students who have hired private tutors or attended private academies to attain higher scores show evidence of distrust in public education, due to contradictory priorities and failure to implement educational policies, thereby increasing student pressure and creating the stress that goes with extra-curricular studies. Thus far, it is impossible to find a common critical consensus about public schools, only multiple different views of the problems they face. The only common element in debate on these issues is that public education is failing to achieve something important.

As the nature of Korean society has significantly changed, people have assumed that Korea has simply adopted Western values due to influx of western ideology. Although capitalism, industrialization, science and technology have been adopted, the underlying cultural values that emphasize human relatedness remain strong and the desire to become educated and to obtain financial security remains a top priority in the Korean society (Park and Kim, 2006). Thus, people view education as the most viable way to achieve personal, familial and national prosperity.

As Park and Kim (1999) argued, the:

'...spirit of Confucianism and viewing education not only as a means to an end, but as an end itself still persist. It became a moral imperative that all individuals, regardless of sex and social class acquire an education'. (p. 99)

Hence, although Korea has seen numerous changes, struggles and developments so that the Korea of yesterday is different to what it is today, nonetheless, one can also glimpse the historical and cultural influences of traditional values and beliefs embedded within society. The next section further examines the idea of borrowing policy from other countries or cultures.

2.2.4 Policy borrowing.

This section examines studies about policy borrowing. Recent decades have seen a wave of large scale education reform affecting many countries in the world. For example, in the US, the 'no child left behind' (NCLB) act was implemented in 2001 which looked at improving teacher quality and national yearly assessment (Learning Point Associate,

2005). In the UK, the implementation of National Literacy strategy (NLS) launched in 1998 and the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) in 1999 (DfEE, 1999), claim that more interactive forms of whole class teaching play a vital role in raising literacy and numeracy standards by promoting high quality whole class teaching (DfEE, 1998). Likewise, curriculum trends in different continents have targeted outcomes-based education and social-constructivist approaches to teaching and learning.

Above all, nations are also combining efforts to introduce large international testing programmes in an effort to compare students' and schools' performance in each nation. This will provide a broader context within which to understand students' learning and teachers' performance. International tests organised by two rival bodies are 'The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development' (OECD) and the 'Association for the Evaluation of Educational achievement' (IEA), and are funded largely by the governments of the countries that take part. OECD studies which were also mentioned in previous sections in the review of literature are best known as PISA, and IEA studies as TIMSS and PIRLS (Goldstein, 2008). The results of these studies are frequently used for policy purposes, both directly in terms of changes to curriculum or indirectly through the publication of results that generate pressure for change. Thus, educational institutions around the world have been under increasing pressure from governments to demonstrate high outcomes and standards in the quality of education. The basis for assessing and reporting learners' progress and achievement have led to the adoption of learning outcomes, known as 'standards', or other terms like 'benchmarks' and 'outcomes based education' (Brindley, 2001).

As a results of these international tests, Fuller and Clarke (1994) have suggested that education systems have been motivated to look at other nations, for example to create better teaching and learning environments that will bring desired changes in learners, or to help policy makers become more knowledgeable, or even dissatisfied, with their own current education policies and practices. Furthermore, as the consequence of globalization, there is immediate access to information which has accelerated the spread of ideas, policies and practices across national boundaries, and has provided an impetus to the borrowing of policies and best practices between countries. The ‘borrowing’ of systems and practices has been central to one of the oldest, most controversial theoretical traditions in comparative education. There are other various expressions that have been used synonymously, such as ‘copying’, ‘importation’ and ‘transfer’ (Zymek and Zymek, 2004). The term ‘borrowing’ is used throughout this study, as ‘policy borrowing’ is a term firmly established in literature. As such, it has been an aim of those concerned with the investigation of educational issues to identify procedures elsewhere which might be adopted to improve provision in the native country. In other words, aspects of successful policy observed in foreign situations might then be ‘borrowed’.

The assumptions that policy can simply be transplanted from one national situation to another are common, just as it is common to hear politicians make claims about the advantages of foreign models and their potential for incorporating it into their own education system. Grindle and Thomas (1991) suggested that policy makers:

‘tend to assume that decisions to bring about change automatically result in changed policy or institutional behaviour’ (p. 212).

However, Khan (1989) argues, policy:

'implementation is not a brief pause between a shiny idea and a smart delivery'
(p. 864).

One very recent example involves comments made by the US President Barack Obama in praising the Korean education system and their high achievement in all international tests. Comparing the US national schools against the Korean national schools in each nation, the US president suggested changes to the US education system that resemble the school calendar and the afterschool programmes in Korea. In referring to the US education system, the president argued:

'That calendar may have once made sense but today, it puts us at a competitive disadvantage, ... Our children spend over a month less in school than children in South Korea. That is no way to prepare them for a 21st-century economy ... I know longer school days and school years are not wildly popular ideas. Not in my family, and probably not in yours. But the challenges of a new century demand more time in the classroom.' (Nasaw, 2009; The Guardian)

However, the president's remark came as a surprise to people in the Korean education system, as it has been under constant public criticism due to the long school hours, the heavy dependence on after school programmes, and the high expenditure on private tutoring.

Much research suggests that educational theories and practices have frequently been imported without proper consideration of the conditions in which it will be implanted. Nguyen et al (2006) have drawn attention to the difference of non-western and western societies' cultural heritages. This study illustrates the claim that Confucian Heritage cultural contexts differ from those in the west; when policies and practices are imported from the west, they:

'revealed a complex web of cultural conflicts and mismatches' (p. 4).

A similar case is seen in a study in Korea. Kwon (2002), points to a large discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and what they actually practiced. The Korean government sends public officials for post graduate studies to foreign nations, especially to developed countries like America, UK etc. This program was incorporated to broaden their perspective and view-points so the overseas experience may have an impact on further planning. The new child centred curriculum was introduced by a government official who had studied in America, and later transplanted their learning to Korea (Lee, 1996). The research trends were introduced, as well as, educational theories and classroom practices for teaching the new curriculum from an American context. However, the results of this study show, Korean teachers were found to hold and reflect the traditional values and Korean cultural characteristics, which are somewhat different to the American culture. This caused inconsistency in teaching the recently implemented child-centred curriculum. Thus, this study reveals that when adopting or borrowing ideas, their appropriateness or suitability for the particular context of Korea should have been considered. In this case, the classroom practice required of Korean teachers was in direct contradiction to their professed belief. This was a paradox of which these teachers were quite unaware.

In both cases mentioned above, it was assumed that when other countries seek universal solutions from successful countries, it is manipulated to one's advantage by central agencies and:

'assumes that the same instructional materials and pedagogical practice hold constant meaning in the eyes of the teachers and students' (Fuller and Clarke, 1994; p. 119).

Furthermore, Watkins and Briggs's, (2001) study questions the relevance of western educational research for educational reform in Asian countries. They have argued that educational research needs to be done in context and should consider local cultural values and beliefs. Further, they argued, the main thrust of current western literature based on constructivist principles does not work in Asian schools. They illustrated their study with examples of studies in Hong Kong, thus demonstrating that western research and theorizing about a number of basic psychological processes such as cognition, affect, and emotion may not be generalizable across cultures.

Observations were made of the difficulties involved with policy borrowing, even in the early studies of Matthew Arnold, Mark Pattison and Michael Sadler (cited in Phillips et al, 2004; p. 774). What might seem to be an observable and straightforward international process, beginning with the identification of successful practice, introduction into the home context and then assimilation, in fact proves quite complex, and poses a number of problems. According to Michael Sadler's much quoted speech:

'In studying foreign systems of Education we should not forget that the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside...

...But is it not likely that if we have endeavoured, in a sympathetic spirit, to understand the real working of a foreign system of education, we shall in turn find ourselves better able to enter into the spirit and tradition of our own national education, more sensitive to its unwritten ideals, quicker to catch the

signs which mark its growing or fading influence, readier to mark the dangers which threaten it and the subtle workings of hurtful change...The practical value of studying, in a right spirit and with scholarly accuracy, the working of foreign systems of education is that it will result in our being better fitted to study and to understand our own' (Sadler, 1900 cited in Phillips, 2006; p. 46).

Learning from other nations by comparing learning and teaching practice is well and good. But when this global transfer of ideas, policies and practices continually ignores the national and cultural aspects of that country, and while practitioners remain largely ignorant about the economic, political, demographic and cultural differences between the systems, they are likely to draw misleading and deceptive conclusions regarding importing the policies and practices. Goldstein also pointed out that large scale assessment programs are highly complex and require substantial expertise to understand their proper uses and limits (Goldstein, 2004). The output of numbers can only tell us so much about the current situation. Such details can only be fully understood by employing a more fine grained methodology, which includes the voices of the actors involved and pays attention to the context of both past and present.

Therefore, it should be recognized that what works in one educational context may not work in another. As such, educational reform based on importing policy and practice of ideas on teaching and learning from a different culture needs to be examined and conducted with more caution. It thus undermines the very notion of the feasibility of policy borrowing. However, despite our understanding and awareness of these complexities of borrowing, the examination of other successful educational systems cannot be ignored and needs to be analysed and understood. There is evidence in many studies which shows that policy, teachers and curriculum developments sometimes fail to

recognize that both students and teachers are part of the local culture, and while changes are implemented and occur, sometimes they persist in cherishing and keeping a certain traditional cultural milieu (Thomas, 1997). Fuller and Clarke (1994) suggest:

'there is a need to move from searching for the universal effects of specific teaching tools and teaching behaviour to specifying the local conditions and confront issues of how these tools and pedagogies are actually perceived by local national cultures' (p. 4).

2.3 Religious impact.

There are major oriental religions which have had a profound impact upon Korea in formulating their values and behavioural system (Kim, 2002). The social values of Korea reflect the synthesis and development of diverse influences, traditional, indigenous and foreign. The traditional religions include Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism (Kim, 2002). Christianity also works to influence and modify human actions and institutions in Korea. Kim (2002) suggested that in present day South Korea, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism are not as prevalent as before and Christianity is shown to be the most prevalent religion. Smith (2009) suggested that 36% of Koreans have no religion, yet nearly half of all professed religious believers in the traditionally Confucian and Buddhist cultures of East Asia are Christian. Smith went on to argue that Christianity has played a significant role in Korea's modernization (Song, 1997).

Although it is suggested that religion is an integral component of cultural values, the differences between religious beliefs need to be clarified before we look at the impact of religion on traditional Korea.

2.3.1 Buddhism.

Buddhism and Confucianism have been generally accepted as religions in Korea; however there is a major difference between them. Buddhism is understood and practiced as a pure religion with its recognition of heaven and hell. Confucianism, by contrast, is understood more as a moral philosophy, and a 'code of conduct' rather than a religion (Lee, 1984).

During the *Shilla* (A.D. 668-935) and *Koryo* (918-1392) period, Buddhism was the dominant religious and cultural influence in Korea. Buddhism states that man is on a perpetual quest to achieve spiritual perfection. The soul is reincarnated over and over, so that it can advance towards perfection. As the soul moves up, it will return to simpler life forms, such as cows or trees. Buddhism emphasizes the nurturing of good relationships, filial respect, fidelity, friendship, and cultivating the spiritual essence of an individual (Kim, 2002).

With the beginning of the *Choson* period (1392-1910), the government adopted a policy of oppressing Buddhism, while promoting Confucianism. According to Kim (2002), although the numbers of followers of Buddhism saw a decrease, there were claims that the basic teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism were in agreement. In particular, Confucianism and Buddhism were mutually complementary, not only at the philosophical level, but at the social level as well, and the two teachings could function together to establish social harmony. Many adherents of Buddhism combine Buddhist practice and Taoist shamanism, while also following Confucian teaching.

2.3.2 Shamanism and Taoism.

The origin of Shamanism in Korea is unknown. However, the practice of Shamanism in Korea shows the importance of the family system, which has been integrated into the teachings of Confucianism. Shamanism, the oldest indigenous religion, goes back to prehistoric times and is based on belief in a world inhabited by spirits (Kim, 2002). Shamanists believe that spirits have the power to influence or change the fortunes of people. Having a meaningful, moral and virtuous life is ‘an end unto itself’. Song (1987) argued that the emphasis on families has created one of the most family oriented groups of people in the world. Maintaining family tradition and enhancing family prestige are the most important obligations of each family member.

A further traditional Korean belief is Taoism or Daoism, which is represented through the yin and yang, the symbols of harmony and inner equilibrium, focusing on the individual in nature rather than the individual in society. Taoism emphasizes a rejection of worldly affairs and a desire for life in harmony in nature. Taoism avoids conventional social obligations and stresses leading a simple, spontaneous and meditative life close to nature. Originally, shamanism was characterized by the mystic ecstatic experience of oneness with heaven, a symbol of ultimate reality. Taoism is an esoteric belief that centres on the belief that there is an energy that flows through all things in the universe and that the individual must strive to understand and become one or at peace with these natural forces. Taoism was rarely accepted as an official religion and has remained a minor tradition in Korea. Taoism saw a few periods of popularity during the *Choson* Dynasty (1392-1910) and some aspects of it were probably incorporated into shamanistic practices that are still present today. Korean shamanism is called *sindundo* and

emphasizes the performance of healing and spiritual ceremonies called *mudang* in Korea (Lee, 1999). Taoism, Shamanism and Buddhism are highly disciplined philosophic religions that stress personal salvation through the renunciation of worldly desire.

2.3.3 Confucianism.

Confucianism on the other hand is a social ethic that provides a worldly based moral code of conduct, whose worldly virtues are filial piety and a combination of loyalty and reverence. There are no records to show when Confucianism was first introduced in Korea. However, it is suggested that Chinese classics and literature were learned during the *Three Kingdoms* period (37 BC- 668 AD). It is thus believed that during this period, Confucianism emerged as the central ideology of the state. However, near the end of the *Koryo* Dynasty (918-1392), Buddhism as a religion gradually declined while Confucian ideals were accepted and strengthened by the population in the form referred to by Western scholars as Neo-Confucianism. The rulers of *Choson* Dynasty (1392-1910) adopted Neo-Confucianism as their state ideology (Yoon, n.d). However, it is believed that Buddhism and Confucianism coexisted and developed into ‘Neo-Confucianism’ in which Buddhism provided the philosophical foundation of society while Confucianism concerned itself with social action (Kim, 2002). However, the term Confucianism is used to describe both Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism. Unlike traditional Confucianism, which emphasized moral practice regarding socio-political principles and ethical values, Neo-Confucianism, amalgamated the traditional Confucian principles with the fundamentals of Buddhist philosophy and Taoist metaphysics, stressing both formal and theoretical sides. The formal side developed idiosyncratic Korean Confucianism which

centred on rigid formalism and ritualism, whereas the theoretical side was integrated into education and evolved into the ideology of respect for human science.

From the beginning of the *Choson* Kingdom, Confucianism was regarded not only as a national religion and ideology, which cultivated bureaucrats who lead the people but also as a measure by which to judge socio-political affairs and individual ethics and values. Under the Confucian *Choson* dynasty, religion was inseparable from politics. In addition, Confucian education was connected with the social status system based on animated “familism” or collectivism, which emphasized the importance of the family or clan. Confucian learning was viewed as an educational means for the cultivation of moral character and as a tool for a successful career through the Confucian elite institutions and the *kwa-keo* (the national civil examinations) system which is currently known as *go-shi* system.

Korean society during this period was divided into five classes: ‘royalty’; *yangban*, the educated civil and military elite who made up 15% of the population (Sorenson, 1994); *chungin*, the links between the *yangban* and the common people; *sangmin*, the commoners; and the *chonmin*, the lowly born (Robinson, 1994).

Confucianism provided Korean society with a means to rationalize the retention of native customs and to integrate those customs with the Chinese values the Korean society had been assimilating since the beginning of the *Choson* Dynasty. In other words, Confucianism contributed to the establishment of social and political principles for the upper privileged class through the formal Confucian institutions and was the only way to high government office. The elite class classified as the *yangban* was the ideal human

being in Korea in the *Choson* period, and was measured in refined personal conduct and high moral standards in all actions. The passing of the civil service examination was the most desirable path to success. Thus, the *yangban* devoted themselves wholly to the study of classics, because these traits were seen as essential to the rulers of an orderly society (Lee, 1984). As education was the most effective route for social mobility and recognition, the desire to succeed educationally became deeply ingrained in the society and people's minds, and this continues to be seen in current Korean culture. As a result, rank and hierarchical status were emphasized in Korean society creating the social class during this period.

Although, there were opportunities for social advancement through the passing of the civil service examination and these schools were open to the public, there was limited access. As preparation for the examination took a number of years of study, only families with the financial resources could support this. It was suggested that during this period some children from the elite class were sent overseas for education. Kim-Renaud (1991) suggests, as early as the Three Kingdom period, (57 BC- 668 AD) families sent their children to China for academic studies as examination was based on Confucian classics.

Literacy was restricted to a small number of the elite or upper class, while most of the other common people were illiterate. The accepted view of Confucianism emphasized the perfectibility of all men and assumed that each individual was capable of benefiting from education and achieving moral enlightenment. The obvious reason for obsession with these civil examinations was to obtain a position with the government as a government official, military official or local administrator. The examination system and

schools associated with it served as a means of allocating power and economic privilege along with hereditary social status and social recognition (Seth, 2005).

Embedded within Confucian values are five principal relationships, through which each person defines a sense of identity, duty, and responsibility. These moral rules of conduct for political, social and family relations have been dominant in Korean society for thousands of years. Confucian ethical philosophy stresses a strict hierarchical order for human relationships, based on age and gender. Confucius, the central figure of Confucianism, suggested moral obligations which are the five basic relationships of ruler-subject (loyalty between sovereign and subject), father-son (affection between father and son), elder brother-younger brother (the courtesy of the young for the old), husband-wife (the distinction between the roles of husband and wife), friend and friend (trust between friends) and presents various moral disciplines and virtues for each of the relationships (Hofstede, 1991). The basic role and duty of the parent was caring and to provide for their children when they are young.

Sung (1992) argues that parents and other elders hold considerable authority and are to be treated with great respect by the children. Thus, the traditional form of parental authority is the role of fathers as disciplinarians who are more emotionally distant. One was expected to control oneself rather than express intense emotions, whether positive or negative. Historically, in Confucianism, showing affectionate behaviour was withheld between parent and child, and even between husband and wife. Parents were not expected to express their affection for their child verbally or physically. All physical contact, such as hugging and kissing between parents and their grown-up children was prohibited in

Korean traditional society. In spite of the cultural role of strict disciplinarians, parents nonetheless felt love towards their children, but expression of their sentiments was constrained by their culturally defined parenting role (Sung, 1992).

Children on the other hand, were taught how to behave or orient themselves towards their parents. This included treating parents with great respect, being obedient, bringing honour and glory to the family, making sacrifices for the family etc. In family and social relations, a child showed affection for his or her parents whether living or deceased and the younger generation showed courtesy to its elders. ‘Filial piety’ is the honouring of ancestors and obedience to show respect and financial support for parents (Hofstede, 1991).

In the father-son relationship, the son must be submissive to his father and must care for his aged parents, emphasizing the courtesy shown by the young to the old; the wishes of the elders are always honoured and respected. The ethical attribute stressed in Confucianism is dedication to the family. These authoritarian parents value obedience, favour punitive and forceful measures and believe children should accept their parent’s word for what is right. Thus, they do not encourage verbal give and take.

Although Buddhism and Taoism are known to have great influence on Korean culture, Confucianism has been most influential in shaping the behaviour patterns and structures of the family and community (Park and Cho, 1995). As Lee (1989) states:

‘Confucianism posits the family as the fundamental unit of society, incorporating the economic functions of production and consumption as well as

the social functions of education and socialization, guided by moral and ethical principles ' (cited in Park et al, 2007; p. 296).

2.3.4 Confucianism in contemporary Korean society.

Living in a rapidly changing world with transformations in social structure, people are confronted with many challenges to their traditional values, attitudes and how they view the world. Rozman (1990) claimed, that:

'East Asia is not as Confucian as it was 150 years ago ...' (p. 13).

And he comes close to saying that the concept of Confucianism does not apply to modern conditions. Obviously, traditional Confucian values have influenced East Asia, yet he argued South Korea is no longer a traditional Confucian society and the term chosen to characterize modern conditions is capitalism, not Confucianism. Then, how can it be said that Confucian values exist in a modern society?

Lee (1998) argues that modernisation may have produced variations in the behaviour of Koreans, yet the mode of modern behaviour exists side by side with strong traditional values. Also although economic development is associated with shifts away from absolute norms, the broad cultural heritage of a society, and values that are imprinted, endure despite modernization (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Confucianism retains a strong influence in Korea today.

Rozman (1999) argued, there is no term better than 'Confucianism' for describing:

'... family patterns, educational practices, attitudes toward the state, and other patterns found throughout East Asia' (p. 13).

Confucianism has also been criticised as a hindrance and an obstruction to change due to the emphasis on relationship structures, especially the obedience and subordination of inferiors to the authority of superiors. Others, though, have argued that aspects of Confucian behaviour and attitudes have actually contributed to modernization such as high-achievement motivation, high value placed on education, personal sacrifice for sake of the group and especially the family (Lee, 1998).

It was Tu (1996) who claimed Confucian values of the common benefit and hard work without immediate reward contributed to Korea's rapid recovery from the 2009 financial crisis. In 2010, the country grew its economy by six per cent while most of the developed world remained stable or saw negative growth. Confucian values may not be a part of a conscious belief system, but it is:

'deeply embedded in modes of daily life' (Rozman, 1990; p. 13)

Thus, Confucian values are subconscious and Confucianism is more a mode of thought, not a set of rules and commands that exists in modern Korean society. Therefore, Confucianism impacts Korean lifestyles today. More specifically, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of education, ancestor worship, relationships, and organizational hierarchies.

There is not much literature that describes the contemporary education system and the effects of Confucianism. However, according to Lee (2001), the contemporary education system demonstrates a Confucian style hierarchical body. He explained that there is little discourse between the staff of the school institutions regarding policy or important matters, and the head requires staff devotion. The seating arrangements in

faculty meeting reflect status based on rank, age and gender which reflect the hierarchical relation between superiors and subordinate. In addition, respectful honorific language is used to senior members regardless of age and gender. These concepts are argued to demonstrate a Confucian style hierarchical relationship in the education system.

The focus on education and self-cultivation within the Confucian tradition as a means for improving both individual and family position in society encouraged the expansion of mass education. However, the motivation to pursue education as a means to wealth, social mobility and status are not Confucian moral values. For wealth, mobility and status are not Confucian virtues. However, there are instrumental Confucian values associated with the pursuit of education. For wealth, filial piety required the acquisition of wealth and status for the benefit of one's family. Since education was a means to securing these benefits, it was a valuable instrument to satisfying one's filial obligations. And since satisfying one's filial obligations is a genuine Confucian moral virtue, piety was both a moral value and a practical motive to pursue an education.

Further, family is regarded a high Confucian value which stresses the importance of father-son relationship and the defining the role of the family. In the past, Confucianism regarded the eldest son as most valuable as they would continue the family line. Schwarz et al (2006) argued that:

‘One of the prime responsibilities of a husband is to have a son who can continue the family line. The other main responsibility is to educate the son so that he will carry on the family name and represent the family’ (p. 317).

Traces of the role of the eldest son still remain in Korea today and still represent the family and can bring great pride to their parents. However, any child, a boy or a girl, can carry on the family line; the necessity of having a son is slowly dying away.

Nevertheless, the Confucian value remains of parents as self-sacrificing and devoted to ensuring their child's well-being. In return, the children study hard and attempt to become successful in order to take care of their parents. However, Korean children still uphold their duty to care for their elders, but it seems to a lesser extent than formerly.

Schwarz et al (2006) argued:

'two important features of the socialization practice still remain: parental devotion and indulgence' (p. 318).

Some studies have showed that the influence of traditional values was less strong among Koreans, who were younger, female and in greater contact with western ideas both in Korea and in North America. Younger Koreans, socialized to meet the changing demands of industrialized Korea and America, endorse traditional values less strongly than older Koreans. This age effect on values appears to be similar across Asian societies that are undergoing sociocultural changes. This has also been reported in Japan and in India, where young people expressed more individualist and less collectivist values compared to the older people (Yamaguchi, 1994 and Mishra, 1994 cited in Hyun, 2010).

Lee, K. (1998) suggested that the mixtures of traditional and modern modes of behaviour reflect conflicts at the level of ideology and values as well (p. 249). Sohn (2006) argued that honorifics that once were employed as markers of social rank are now being used more for differentiating formality and less for social hierarchy. For instance,

depending on the situation, a younger person may refer to an older or mature person (not close acquaintance) as 선생님 /seonsaengnim (means respected teacher) regardless of job position or status. Another example, people may catch the attention of a waitress at a restaurant by calling out ‘here’, or 언니/onni (means older sister) when serving you. Usually, an older female is referred to as 아줌마/ajuma (meaning married and older). However, recently, customers have been referring to most females (old and young, married and single) working in restaurant and cafes as onni. Lee, K. (1998) referring to his study of younger generation members of rural communities, showed they did not use the traditional honorific form of speech directed towards elders that once was required and was maintained by social sanctions.

Moreover, Kim-Renaud (1991) has suggested that:

‘in close-knit families, younger members often address older relatives with ‘pan mal’ and that this practice is usually interpreted as a manifestation of affection and a bond between family members, rather than as a lack of respect’ cited in Sohn (2006, p. 135).

‘Pan mal’ is the Korean term for casual or informal speech. The pan mal form is chosen intentionally by the speaker to avoid specifying an attitude on his/her power relationship towards the addressee.

However, despite the decrease in usage of formal traditional language in current Korean society, the referent honorifics for age and rank still strongly exist and the strong influence of the traditional Confucianism values can be seen in the modern society. Hyun’s (2010) study showed that traditional values still persisted even with exposure to

western media and cultural practices. His comparative study of 158 Korean immigrants in Detroit and 209 Koreans in Seoul illustrated that despite the large number of years that they had spent in Detroit, and their great exposure to western ideas and practices, the average Detroit Korean was as traditional in value as the average Korean respondent in Seoul.

Inglehart and Baker's (2000) study illustrated that although economic development is linked with systematic cultural changes there is also evidence of the persistence of distinctive cultural traditions. This study used data from World Values Surveys which investigated attitudes, values and beliefs around the world from 1995-1998 (World Values Survey). Inglehart and Baker argued:

'Cultural change seems to be path dependent. Economic development tends to bring pervasive cultural changes, but the fact that a society was historically shaped by Protestantism or Confucianism or Islam leaves a cultural heritage with enduring effects that includes subsequent development' (p. 49).

Therefore, even in a changing world, Confucian still has a profound influence and remains a part of Korean lifestyle, roles and traditions.

2.4 Overview.

This section has provided relevant background information to the current Korean education system. The historical evolution of the education system helps to show various changes and development based on economic and environmental changes. This section has also clarified the different religious beliefs and their impact on Korean society.

Buddhism and Christianity are believed and understood as a pure religion; Confucianism by contrast is more of a moral philosophy rather than a religion.

Further, economic development was seen to bring about change and variation in the behaviour of Korean society. Especially among the younger generation with the increased use of *pan mal* (informal language), however, the mode of modern behaviour existed side by side with distinctive cultural traditions which are embedded in the society. As strong traditional values are still held and continue to affect the Korean population, this background information aims to enhance the interpretation and understanding of the study.

Chapter 3: Teaching and learning approaches.

3.0 Introduction.

This chapter explores relevant literature regarding cultural differences in teaching and learning approaches. Chan (2010) argued:

'...no learner is culture free, and it is the belief that learners hold that cannot be separated from the specific culture in which they grow up' (p. 62).

Thus, learning style is claimed to be one of the bases of cultural difference which has developed as a result of our life experiences and learning environment (Stigler and Hiebert, 1999). Learning style aims to account for individual differences according to the manner in which the learner processes information from their environment, and this may be a consistent way of responding to use of stimuli in the context of learning. It is thus imperative that students' cultural beliefs and values be considered in any research that examines learning.

The following section explores a range of literature on teaching and learning approaches that has been derived either from a stereotypical view or from taking cultural conditions into consideration. Particularly, where it is possible, the national context is regarded when reporting on the literature.

3.1 Asian learning styles.

3.1.1 Stereotype of the Asian student.

A review of literature on Asian student learning illustrates divergent views. Stereotypical images of the Asian student have characterized Chinese and Hong Kong students (sometimes referred to as CHC- Confucian Heritage Cultures,) as quiet and passive learners, who are prone to rote learning (Biggs, 1987; Watkins and Biggs, 1996, 2001; Kennedy, 2002). Tense, robot-like and resigned submissions are also words that describe these students. The students are believed to lack creativity and problem solving skills, and it is suggested that they are able to attain high level of academic competence only by spending long hours in classes and after school doing homework (Watkins and Biggs, 1996, 2001; Kennedy, 2002). Similar views about Asian students were also expressed by educators teaching in Asian countries. For example, according to Murphy (1987), a tertiary educator teaching in Hong Kong, found that Hong Kong students were reluctant to ask questions, to express opinions, and to be critical. It is also claimed in much literature that Asian Confucian-Heritage cultures frequently show a preference for didactic teaching and rote learning. This has been also the case for Korea in studies which focus on examination and didactic teaching with rote learning. As Shin & Koh (n. d) argued,

‘Despite recent reform movement of the education system, the Korean education system is based on rote learning and almost exclusively on college entrance examinations’ (p. 6).

Similarly, literature has suggested that Asian, Chinese and Hong Kong students tend to be rote learners, predisposing them to a surface approach to learning; they are assumed

to experience what western educators argue is an unfavourable learning style (Watkins and Biggs, 1996, 2001). Briefly, the concept of rote learning is also known as ‘surface’ approaches to learning. On the other hand, ‘understanding’ is known as a ‘deep’ approach to learning (Marton and Säljö, 1976). Much research using quantitative methods has illustrated that deep learning necessitates a critical analysis of new facts and concepts, the linking of new knowledge to prior knowledge and a focus on meaning, enabling problem solving in novel contexts. In contrast, when learning with a surface approach, information is memorized, and facts are isolated and no attempt is made to link them to existing concepts and knowledge (Biggs, 1987; Watkins, 1998). The surface approach is considered similar to rote learning, and promotes the superficial retention of material for assessment, rather than for recalling information for understanding and problem solving (Kember, 1997).

Kennedy (2002) suggested that learning habits such as rote learning and didactic teaching styles may have developed traditionally by learning of Chinese characters. It is believed that when Chinese and Asian students first learn the Chinese script they have to copy out and memorize thousands of written characters. The nature of the ideographic script develops children’s ability to recognize patterns and memorize by rote. This was also the case in Korea in the *Choson* era (1392-1910) where written Korean language consisted of Chinese characters. The students had to memorise vast amounts of characters and sentences in order to master each level. Thus, this style of learning and teaching may have transferred, subsequently, to the contemporary classroom.

There is no doubt that rote learning without understanding can lead to limited learning outcomes, and that when Hong Kong, Chinese, Japanese and Korean students are seen to be memorizing, it is assumed that they are rote learning. However, contrary to the view that rote and surface approaches to learning is conducive to low quality outcomes, evidence suggests that students from China, Japan, Korea and other Asian countries tend to show outstanding results in international comparisons of educational progress (Stevenson and Lee, 1991). Clarke and Gieve (2006) argued:

'... much of the evidence produced for the way Chinese students behave in classroom settings has been drawn from reports and perceptions by western instructors, thus filtered through their own values, expectations and standards' (p. 60- 63).

They have often defined these learning behaviour and beliefs as the opposite of western academic values. These perceptions have often been based on partial knowledge or misunderstanding of the Chinese or Asian students and have given rise to negative stereotypes.

Further analysis of western and Chinese or Confucian student learning behaviours are often couched as binaries such as deep/surface, adversarial/harmonious, independent/dependent, in what is referred to as taxonomies or differences. These dichotomies rely on the notion of ideal western students and assume that individuals within these systems do indeed have these attributes. Besides, the tendency to permeate and involve the use of fixed binary concepts and grouping of the students without looking at contextual teaching and learning factors creates a polarity that exaggerates reality and further generates an unfavourable classroom image.

3.1.2 Divergent views.

Watkins and Biggs (2001) suggested:

'Students from Confucian-heritage cultures such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea and Japan are taught in classroom conditions that in terms of Western standards cannot be conducive to good learning: large classes, expository methods, relentless norm referenced assessment, and harsh classroom climate. Yet CHC students, at least in Science and mathematics have deeper, meaning-oriented, approaches to learning' (p. 3).

There is research which presents different or even contradictory perceptions to the stereotypical description in the previous section about the ways in which Asian learners approach their learning. The alternative and divergent views on Asian student learning show Chinese, Asian and Hong Kong students to be successful learners who exhibit various characteristics and patterns that lead them to excel in both academic performance and cross-national tests. Major discrepancies can be found between the views held by educators with experience in teaching Asian students, and those held by researchers who investigated the learning approaches of Asian students.

3.1.3 Memorisation and understanding.

There are different ways that students think about and carry out their learning. Western educators seem to assume that students should be encouraged to understand rather than to memorise what they are learning (Dahlin and Watkins, 2000). It is a common view that when Asian students are memorising or learning by repetition to

ensure accurate recall, rote learning has no regard to the meaning and is associated with surface learning without understanding.

However, different methods of memorising exist, some of which are intended to develop or reinforce understanding. Watkins and Biggs (2001) suggested:

‘CHC students are perceived as passive rote learners, yet show high levels of understanding’ (p. 3).

Watkins (1998) argued, memorization can lead to understanding, and that repetition can contribute to higher-level learning outcomes (Dahlin and Watkins, 2000; Watkins, 1998). Dahlin and Watkins (2000) compared, German and Hong Kong Chinese learners’ views on the role of repetition in memorization and found that the Hong Kong Chinese learners were aware of two possibilities inherent in repetition. That is to create a deep impression on the mind and to discover new meaning. The authors argued, therefore, that memorization and understanding can be seen as complementary in leading to higher cognitive outcomes.

Marton et al (1996) also argued that the Asian learners have shown student learning to be characterized by an intertwined process of memorization and understanding. Marton et al investigated twenty teacher-educators from mainland China on their perception of learning, understanding, memorizing and the teaching-learning relationship within various cultural contexts. Memorization was used to deepen and develop understanding. While memorising does not create understanding it is a useful precondition for it.

Moreover understanding is also seen as a more efficient way of memorising. Watkins (1996) study of forty four Hong Kong secondary students showed that the best way to acquire knowledge is to memorise it and the best way to acquire a skill is to practice it repeatedly. In this study, the students did not use memorising or understanding but rather they aimed to understand in order to memorise more effectively. They believed that understanding and memorisation could reinforce each other in both directions; that is, understanding could contribute to a better memorisation and memorisation could enhance understanding. Similarly, Au et al (1999) believed that if the students really understood the content, they would have a very clear impression that it would help them to memorise without much effort. Lee (1996) suggested that in the Confucian tradition, memorization is placed alongside understanding, reflecting, and questioning as a basic component of learning. Thus, it is argued that understanding can facilitate memorization, and memorization is seen as a precursor to deep understanding. This idea is also common among the Japanese (Hess and Azuma, 1991). In Hess and Azuma's (1991) study of fifty eight Japanese children and families, repetition was seen as a way of coming to understand, and they argued:

'repetition becomes a route to understanding' (p. 6).

3.1.4 Building of knowledge.

It is suggested that Chinese students also see learning as a gradual process that requires tremendous dedication and methodical steps. Understanding is seen as a lengthy process that requires extensive personal effort. Kember and Gow (1990) has characterised this as a 'narrow approach'. Their questionnaire and interview study at a Hong Kong

tertiary institution gave examples from a survey of 1043 students working systematically through each section while attempting to understand. The attempt was conjointly made to understand each new concept while committing it to memory before proceeding to the next section or part. This quote illustrated this approach:

'I read in detail section by section. If I find any difficulties I try my best to solve the problem before I go onto the next section....If you don't memorise important ideas when you come across them then you will be stuck when you go on. You must memorise and then go on - understand, memorise and then go on - understand, memorise and then go on. That is my way of studying. (Kember and Gow 1990, p. 361).

Leung (2001) suggested that understanding is:

'not a yes or no matter, but a continuous process or a continuum' (p. 40).

The idea is based on the process of learning which often starts with gaining competence in the procedure, and then through repeated practice, students gradually gain understanding of it. Leung's (2001) study, presented similar views in mathematical teaching. The mathematical teaching was demonstrated in a procedural manner. The teacher's explanation and description of the process demonstrated how to solve a particular problem which students were asked to follow with a similar problem. Feedback was provided to help and assist the student for future problems particularly for examinations. Learning was seen in a continuous process. And, therefore, learning / understanding came gradually as a result of feedback during practice. Vygotsky (1978) argued that development proceeds across time:

‘in a spiral, passing through the same point at each new revolution while advancing to a higher level’ (p. 56).

This suggests that meaning grows and changes as it evolves. Knowledge is built upon, and thus development occurs. Moreover, knowledge is not just simply to learn an idea but to build meaning and to connect new knowledge to what has come before. Therefore, over time and with continued opportunities, ideas increase in depth and students develop their understanding.

3.1.5 Reflective.

Often East Asian students are depicted as being quiet and passive in the classroom. However, Condon (1984) suggested Japanese students and most Asian students show greater reflection compared to American students. Chuah (2010) as a lecturer at the University of Nottingham in Malaysia, made some interesting observations and pointed out that the learning strategies of East-Asian students differ from those of western students. Cortazzi and Jin (1996) also commented that East Asian learning strategies are very different from those of western students. The East-Asian students learn by listening, in order to fully absorb and understand what is being taught. This idea is illustrated by a Chinese university student and an eight year old in Cortazzi and Jin’s (1996, p. 125) study. A comment made by Chinese university student:

‘we are active in our minds. We are thinking all the time. Our minds follow the lecturer with questions and challenges. We are just not used to speaking out. But all of us know very well what is going on and we know the answers to the questions those lecturers asked or other students raised.’

Comment made by an eight year old:

'I may be listening but I am not passive. I am learning in my head. I learn from my teacher. I also learn from what my friends do. If they make a mistake, I learn from that too.'

In these interviews, the students believed that they should ask questions after learning, as they feel that asking should be on the basis of knowledge and they therefore postponed questions until they knew more. Also comments from an interview in Cortazzi and Jin's (2001) study by a Chinese student in Britain felt that British classmates' questions were rude and superficial, because they were spontaneous. Cortazzi and Jin (2001) argued:

'Chinese students are not passive but reflective... Chinese students value thoughtful questions which they ask after sound reflection...' (p. 191).

Cortazzi and Jin (2001) illuminated the Chinese students' behaviour by pointing out its consistency with the Confucian hierarchical line, where students regard teachers as knowing and accept the knowledge transmitted by the teachers. The students are diligent and emphasize the importance of order, respect for authorities and the value of pragmatic acquisition of knowledge. Therefore keeping silent in class does not mean students do not actively engage in thinking or class activities. And, perhaps, because they think while carrying out repetitive tasks, they develop understanding.

According to Nelson (1995), Asian students typically base judgement on logic and analysis rather than on feeling the emotional climate and interpersonal values. Thus they are considered more overtly thinking oriented compared to feeling oriented. Nelson (1995) referred to:

'the Japanese student who wants time to arrive at the correct answer and is uncomfortable when making guesses' (p. 16).

Also, it is noted by Wong (2004), that Chinese students have historically been encouraged to think, reflect and engage in discourse. The logical analysis suggests learners initially commit new material to memory to initiate learning rather than seek to understand it. The knowledge is then applied to real life situations, and it is suggested that questioning and modifying the original material are the final steps to learning and understanding.

Therefore, the view of Asian students as being obedient, passive and non-participative rote learners are misconceptions. Students are silent but are involved in class because they are reflecting on the work presented by the teacher.

3.1.6 Effort and hard work.

Studies have shown that Asian cultures attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort, whereas westerners tend to attribute success and failure to ability and lack of ability (Hess and Azuma, 1991). Consequently, in Asia, education and learning are associated with effort (Biggs, 1996; Lee, 1996). In Hess and Azuma's study, interview with Japanese mothers of preschool children showed that they placed greater emphasis on the value of effort than did their California counterparts whereas American mothers placed greater emphasis on ability. Asian people hold a more adaptive view of intelligence, namely that learning makes one smart (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). Dahlin and Watkins (2000) argued that Western students usually see understanding as a process of sudden insight. Moreover, students in western cultures tend to attribute success or

failure in a task to their own ability and effort, luck, their mood at the time or task difficulty (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). Similar results were found in Holloway's et al (1986) US and Japanese comparison study. American children placed greater emphasis on lack of ability than any other reason to explain low performance. In contrast, the Japanese children believed that their lack of effort resulted in the low performance. These views were also reflected in the study of mothers' and children's attributions in Japan, Taiwan and the US (Stevenson et al, 1986).

Thus, Chinese, Japanese and most Asian students thought of understanding as a long process that required considerable mental effort and believed that effort was more important for success than ability, and that ability itself could be improved by working hard (Salili, 1996, Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). Therefore, intelligence is not something innate and relatively fixed, but rather, something that can be improved by hard work (Watkins and Biggs, 1996). This reflects the longer amount of time spent on academic activities in class, shown in Stevenson's et al (1986) comparative study. This study showed American children not only spend fewer days in school each year and fewer hours in each day, they also spent a lower percentage of school time participating in academic activities. Fifth graders were observed to be engaged in academic activities for 64%, 92% and 87% of the time in Minneapolis, Taipei and Sendai respectively. Chinese and Japanese students were attending to the teacher over 60% of the time; this occurred less than 50 % of the time in American classrooms. In addition, Chinese and Japanese students spent more hours on homework compared to the American children. It was also shown that when the Chinese and Japanese children were not occupied with homework they were given other opportunities to practice by the workbooks purchased by their

parents. This study illustrated that Chinese and Japanese children held strong beliefs about the importance of effort for improvement and accomplishment. Therefore, Chinese, Japanese and Asian students believe that learning involves reflection and application, and above all, hard work, and this can compensate for lack of ability.

3.1.7 Achievement status.

The Asian conception of learning is considered different to that of western societies. Li's (2002) study of Asian and Western education found that the two countries contained different notions about learning. This study suggested that learning in Asia dealt with 'seeking knowledge' including personal attitudes, purposes and action plans for learning. The Asian conceptions emphasised the achievement of breadth and depth of knowledge, the unity of knowing and morality and contributions to society. It was shown that society places high value on education. Confucius suggested a similar conception which is:

'the purpose of learning is to cultivate oneself as an intelligent, creative, independent, autonomous being' (cited in Lee 1996; p. 34).

Similarly, Li's (2002, 2003) comparative study of US and Chinese cultural beliefs about learning further illustrated differences between US and Chinese conceptions of learning. The US and Chinese view of learning from Li's (2002, 2003) research are summarised below;

U.S perspective: 2 categories, first:

1. Active learning centred on the notion that learning is a process in which a person needs to be actively involved (learn by doing);
2. Thinking which concerns the mental process (deductive/inductive reasoning);

3. Inquiry and challenging assumptions through critical thinking;
4. Communicating and critique of learning process.

The second category contained conceptions that indicate internal qualities of an individual:

1. Cognitive skills (memory, focus);
2. Motivational aspects (ambition, commitment);
3. Open mind and creativity (imagination);
4. Intelligence (book-smart, wisdom and street-smart).

Chinese perspective: 3 categories:

1. “heart and mind for wanting to learn.”
 - (a) lifelong pursuit;
 - (b) diligence, hardship, steadfastness, and concentration;
 - (c) humility, mind-set that regards people as always in need of improving themselves;
 - (d) desire (enduring, inner desire for learning).
2. Purposes of learning
 - (a) learning as an end in itself, refers to the notion that learning is essential to being human;
 - (a) status, conveys that learning can benefit the person for practical purposes;
 - (b) contribution to society.
3. Seeking knowledge
 - (a) breadth and depth (deep understanding);
 - (b) extraordinary abilities;
 - (c) knowing and morality (unity between learning and one’s moral character);

(d) originality (one's creativity).

Both groups viewed:

'learning as a process by which individuals' minds acquire what is out there and knowledge exists as a more or less neutral body that individuals' minds can acquire' (p. 264).

However, the difference started with US participants' view of learning and knowledge by addressing questions of what is out there to be known by the mind, what knowledge is reliable and how the mind can process the information and be taught. This view of learning, although seen as an important part of their lives, was considered a relatively neutral construal of knowledge and learning compared to the Chinese view. The Chinese participants regarded knowledge as something that is indispensable to their personal lives. Knowledge not only included the externally existing body but also the social and moral knowing. Learning was believed to cultivate the being as a whole in the moral domain towards "self-perfection" (Li, 2002; p. 248). This view reflects Confucius' views that considers everyone to be educable, and argues that the difference in intelligence does not impede one's ability, but attitude and incentive does (Lee, 1996). Thus, for the Chinese student, knowledge is something that learners cannot do without and must acquire (Li, 2002).

Similarly, Cortazzi and Jin (2001) conceptualised learning in the Chinese classroom to resemble a hierarchical line where students regard teachers as all-knowing and accept knowledge transmitted by teachers. Chinese classroom activities are typically seen as

dominated by teachers with limited questioning or discussion. It is suggested in this study that people with Confucian heritage cultural background tend to be modest and diligent, emphasise the importance of order, respect for authorities, and value pragmatic acquisition of knowledge. In CHC cultures people are encouraged to respect hierarchical relationships in the society. This is also the case for Korean learners, who have been brought up to respect wisdom, knowledge and expertise, especially in order to avoid challenging those in authority (Shin and Koh, n. d). It was reflected in Finch's (2000) study, where the Asian students avoided being critical out of respect for the teacher, so that the teacher would not lose 'face' in front of other students, while also preserving harmony in the classroom.

To this degree, children in Korea are taught to please the teacher, and the students focus on how to please the teacher. Listening attentively throughout the class has been seen as a virtue for generations. Park and Kim (2006) suggested that even in a class size as large as forty, students are attentive, devoted and motivated to doing well in their school work. Thus, Chinese, Korean and Asian student's quiet behaviour does not reflect passive learning but shows the aspiration of the student by concentrating on the respective teachings of the teacher.

Further, the Asian conception of learning is as a means to achieve success and status. Stigler and Smith's (1985) study illustrated that Chinese children have a comparatively stronger interest in rising above their current level of competence. Academic success of the children is:

'an important source of pride for the entire family and academic failure is a stigma to the family' (Stigler and Smith, 1985; p. 1260).

Thus, Chinese students considered doing school work as a duty towards their parents. They showed the influence of cultural values which emphasized hard work and endurance. Lee's (2001) study, in Korea, exemplified importance of educational success. The semi-structured in-depth interviews with seventeen married couples with more than one child showed the significance of education as a means for success in life and stressed the value of good study habits.

For the Korean family, educational success helps obtain a respectable job that would produce high social economic status in the Korean society. In Korea, high socioeconomic status is important. This significance of status was illustrated in Robinson's (1994) study. He conducted a questionnaire study with fifty eight teachers in Korea and interviewed 180 students, six teachers and thirty parents. He found that Korea is still influenced by its traditional past especially the *yangban* culture which continues as the norm for appropriate behaviour. It is suggested that the modern perception of *yangban* behaviour has become the model of proper behaviour for all in the current society. This study provided evidence to confirm that parents' social status is coveted and influenced the academic achievement of their children as a process that maintains the social system.

3.1.8 Overview.

The interpretations of learning conceptions in Chinese, Japanese and Western nations and the meaning of teaching and learning approaches are argued to vary across cultures. It is argued that evidence on Chinese and Asian students' behaviour in the classroom has

been drawn from reports and perceptions by western researchers filtered through their own values, expectations and standards (Clarke et al, 2006; p. 63).

However, much research has also demonstrated that conceptions of Asian children's learning strategies differ from those in the west. It has shown that although Chinese and Asian children use different strategies for learning than those widely favoured in the west, they are nevertheless effective. For instance, it is suggested that Asian children understand that continuous and repetitive practice helps them to acquire a skill, and thus that memorisation helps them to acquire knowledge for understanding (e.g. Kember, 1996; Biggs and Moore, 1996; Watkins, 1996). Another distinguishing concept is that Asian cultures believe more in effort while Western cultures believe more in ability (Stevenson and Lee 1991; Stevenson et al., 1986). This results in Asian children working harder and being more diligent students. Accordingly, the silent behaviour of the students seen in the classroom, demonstrates attentive and considerate behaviour and the lack of questioning and passive behaviour reflects diligent students being active and reflective in their mind (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996).

The chapter has discussed relatively little research which has focused on the Korean pedagogy. However, the literature demonstrates divergent views of pedagogy from other nations such as Hong Kong, China and Japan and has also illustrated teaching and learning from the Asian perspective. Although, Korea is part of Asia, the assumed beliefs and subsequent patterns of behaviour from these studies may not be relevant to Korean pedagogy. The next section therefore reviews literature on Chinese, Japanese, Asian and the Hong Kong classrooms and teaching styles from these teachers' perspectives.

3.2 The teacher and Asian classrooms.

3.2.1 Asian classrooms.

Biggs and Moore (1993) summarised conditions for good learning as set below (cited in Biggs, 1996; p. 45- 46).

1. Teaching methods are varied, emphasizing student activity, self-regulation and student-centeredness, with much cooperative and other group work;
2. Content is presented in a meaningful context;
3. Small classes;
4. Warm classroom climate;
5. High cognitive level outcomes are expected and addressed in assessment and:
6. Assessment is classroom based and conducted in a non-threatening atmosphere.

However, in the literature, Japanese, Chinese and Asian classrooms are usually portrayed as ‘conservative’ and ‘traditional’ (Hess and Azuma, 1991). These classrooms were described as having large classes with a stern demanding teacher who relies on teaching and instructional strategies typically found in a teacher-led classroom. These include didactic and lecture based methods, choral recitation, drill and daily practice, examination driven teaching, an orientation to content rather than process and an emphasis on memorization (Watkins and Biggs, 1996, 2001). Such an educational environment has been seen in the west as characteristic of poor learning outcomes (Biggs, 1987).

3.2.2 Teaching style.

It is recognised that teaching styles may vary in different cultures and contexts, and this is crucially important in understanding the situation within the classroom. Stigler and Hiebert (1999) argued:

‘...how much teaching varied across cultures and how little it varied within cultures’ (p. 11).

This suggests that the teaching patterns may differ between different cultures but do not vary much within a culture. Stigler and Hiebert arrived at their conclusion that teaching is a cultural activity after collecting and analysing videotapes of eighth-grade mathematics lessons from three countries (the United States, Germany, and Japan,) as part of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS). It was observed in this research that teachers pose provocative questions, allowing reflection time and using varying techniques to suit individual students. ‘Constructivist’ was a term to describe the teaching approach in this study. Thus, the authors concluded that teaching varies between each culture and there is distinctly an American, a German, and a Japanese way of teaching.

Alexander (2000) also demonstrated, in his comparative study of five nations, that the meaning of teaching varies between each culture, but varies little within each society. For example, Alexander’s study illustrated that maintaining discipline is not part of any definition of quality in Russia or India, because there are almost no discipline problems in their schools. However, in American and British schools, with individualization of activities, promotion of collaboration and negotiation, and a concern for students’

feelings, there is a greater incidence of behaviour problems. Thus, American and British teachers of high quality must have classroom management skills that are unnecessary in Russia or India.

As such, teaching is suggested to be a cultural activity, and each country is suggested to have a particular way of teaching i.e. a ‘teaching script’ (Stigler and Hiebert, 1999). Further, although many educators and parents perceive major variations between teachers in a country, this variability may be relatively insignificant compared with large differences in teaching practices across cultures (Stigler and Hiebert, 1999). Thus, teaching is a reflection of the broader culture in which it is embedded (Alexander, 2000) and the same meaning does not travel well across cultures (Watkins, 2007).

3.2.3 Teacher / student centred teaching.

The categorizations of teaching espoused by Western researchers may not be entirely relevant in the Asian context (Biggs and Watkins, 2001). According to Kember (1997), there is a high level of agreement between researchers about conceptions of teaching category schemes. He reviewed a synthesis of large independent research reported in thirteen articles and essentially put conceptions into these two categories:

- teacher-centred/content-oriented;
- student-centred/learning-oriented.

A teacher/content-centred conception of teaching is one where the teacher’s job is conceived of as knowing their subject and then accurately and clearly imparting that knowledge to their students. From this conception, Watkins (1998) argued, it is the

student's fault if the learning outcomes are unsatisfactory and, specifically, the student's lack of motivation or ability is to blame. Watkins (1998) argued that, in contrast, a student/learning-centred conception is one where high quality learning is viewed as:

'requiring active construction of meaning and the possibility of conceptual change on the part of the learners' (p. 20).

According to Brandes and Ginnis (1986, p. 12), in student centred learning:

- The learner has full responsibility for his/her learning
- Involvement and participation are necessary for learning
- The relationship between learners is more equal, promoting growth and development,
- The teacher becomes a facilitator and resource person,
- The learner experiences confluence in his education
- The learner sees himself differently as a result of the learning experience.

From the student/learner-centred perspective, it is the teacher's role to facilitate and encourage such construction and development (Watkins, 1998). There is a conception that portrays the Asian teacher as authoritarian purveyor of information, who expects students to listen and memorise correct answers and procedures rather than to construct knowledge themselves (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). It is also believed that the teacher and books are thought of as an embodiment of knowledge, wisdom and truth. That knowledge is in the book and can be taken out and put inside the students' head. Kennedy (2002) had similar views, suggesting that teaching was largely didactic and text-bound,

with little time allowed for discussion, from his study of the learning cultures and learning styles of Chinese learners. Kennedy states:

'for many Chinese students and teachers books are thought of as an embodiment of knowledge, wisdom and truth. Knowledge is 'in' the book and can be taken out and put inside students' heads . . . [whereas] for many foreigners, books are open to interpretation and dispute' (Maley 1983 cited in Kennedy, 2002; p. 432).

However, Stigler and Stevenson (1992) disputed this conception from observations of dozens of elementary school teachers in China, Taiwan and Japan. Their study described the teachers as posing provocative questions, allowing respectful waiting time and varying techniques to suit individual students. They used the term 'constructivist' to describe the teaching approach they saw which was also the term to describe teaching methods in Stigler and Hiebert's (1999) study (mentioned above in Section 3.2.2). Stevenson and Stigler (1992) argued, that the universal whole class teaching does not mean what it does in the west. Stevenson and Stigler (1992) suggested:

'Whereas Western teachers identify whole class teaching with lecturing, Asian teachers do not spend large amounts of time lecturing. They present interesting problems; they pose provocative questions; they probe and guide. The students work hard, generating multiple approaches to a solution, explaining the rationale behind their methods, and making good use of wrong answers' (p. 147).

Stevenson and Lee (1991) also examined a great deal of teaching in both China and Japan and came to the conclusion that although the whole class instruction method is prevalent in both cultures, it gives children maximal opportunities to benefit from the

teacher. They found that Chinese teachers hold children's attention by varying the learning tasks. They expect students to respond to their questions in a rapid fire manner but at the same time, they also emphasize conceptual understanding (p. 47). O'Connor (1991 cited in Biggs, 1996) also used the term constructivist and suggested that Chinese classrooms may appear to be authoritarian, but they are in fact:

'uniformly student centred, frequently engaging all students collectively in problem solving... pushing for high cognitive level through process' (p. 727).

In addition, Mok and Ko (2000), in observing nearly 200 lessons, found that as far as structure was concerned, a lesson usually consisted of a sequence of learning activities which involved a teacher-led whole class discussion with a focus on a specific theme, or completion of a learning task/worksheet by an individual student or a group. Thus, a lesson might consist of a flexible combination of whole-class, group work or individual learning activities. Nearly all lessons contained episodes of whole-class teaching and the majority of these episodes consisted of teacher-student or student-student interactions. Analysis of the nature of the interactions indicated that the teacher spent most of the lesson time in direct teaching and questioning. The high proportion of teacher-centred activities did not necessarily mean that the students were learning passively (p. 163).

It was Pratt (1992), who argued that in the traditional teacher led approach to teaching, where it is the responsibility of the teacher to deliver the content of the lesson, the teachers had no control over students' attitude to learning. However, research has shown that teachers can influence student motivation (Lumsden, 1994). When students enter formal education such as schools, their level of interest and desire to engage in

learning is suggested to be influenced by teachers, administrators, the school environment and their classmates. Lumsden (1994) then argued:

‘To a very large degree, students expect to learn if their teachers expect them to learn’ (p. 2).

Trigwell, Prosser and Waterhouse (1999) showed a causal path between teachers’ approaches to teaching and students’ approaches to learning. Data was collected from 48 first year University chemistry and physics classes, comprising a total of 3956 students and 46 teachers. Both teachers and students were asked to complete the questionnaires in relation to the particular lecture topic being taught to the students. Thus, teachers’ thinking about learning influences their conceptions of teaching, which are linked to their approaches to teaching. Then from the students’ perspective, the teaching context affects students’ conceptions and then their approaches to learning, which in turn determine the learning outcomes. See figure 3.1 below:

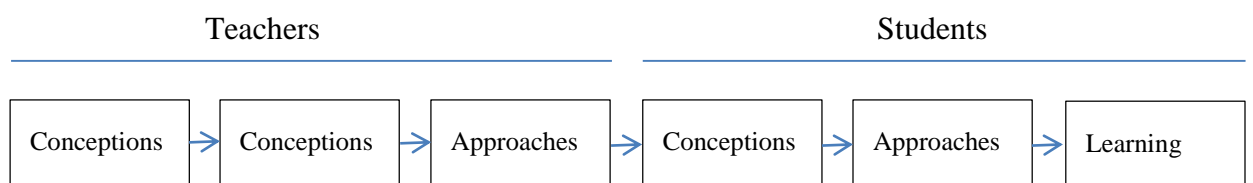


Figure 3.1: Relation between teaching and learning approach. Trigwell et al, (1999 in Watkins and Biggs, 2001; p. 17)

Thus, oppositional dichotomies such as teacher-centred versus student-centred classrooms offer educators false choices, sanctifying one alternative while demonstrating the other. Research should no longer be oppositional or even dichotomous, but rather seen as reflecting strategic and interrelated pedagogical decisions, dependent on purpose

and context, and must be understood in cultural terms before it can be related to any setting outside the classroom. Huang and Leung's (2005) case study of a Shanghai mathematic lesson showed supporting evidence that characterization of 'teacher-centred' classrooms concealed unique teaching processes consisting both of teachers' control of the learning process and of students' engagement in it. Here the distribution of responsibility for knowledge generation can be conceived as the oppositional dichotomization of teacher-centred and student-centred classrooms, with each reflecting complementary responsibilities to a varying degree. Further, the dichotomy between student-centeredness and teacher-centeredness was also questioned in Fan's et al (2004) study. In this study the observation of classroom interaction showed that teachers organized the lessons and controlled the transaction of classroom activities while the students were shown to engage themselves in the process of learning through well-designed activities. The utilisation of the distribution of responsibility for knowledge generation provides an integrative explanatory framework that problematizes teacher-centred and student-centred characterisations of the classroom and resolves the false opposition of dichotomous practices by replacing them with a conception of alternative interrelated classroom practices. Thus, the dichotomy may be too artificial to capture the subtle characteristics in the classroom.

3.2.4 Conceptions of teaching.

Research shows differences in conceptions of the teacher in Chinese and Asian societies compared to western societies. The teaching goal may be conceptualised differently in these cultures. A study conducted in Hong Kong University, which aimed

to explore teaching and learning goals of western and Chinese teachers and explore concepts of effective teaching, revealed that Chinese and western groups of teachers had quite different perspectives (Kember and Gow, 1990). The interpretations of the interviews revealed differences in terms of key teaching qualities. The Chinese teachers seemed to teach according to students' interests and students' needs, so that they could help and guide students in their learning. Many Chinese teachers were concerned with transmitting basic knowledge, not as an end in itself, but as a building block for intellectual skills such as knowledge application, problem solving or critical thinking. Another theme among Chinese teachers was of orchestrating the learning experience in order to estimate how much knowledge needed to be taught as the basis for analysis and critical thinking and how much structure students needed. However, Western teachers were much more concerned to help and guide students via assignments, (the term assignment in itself seems to be very culture bound) or to provide opportunities for critically challenging and provoking students. The western group saw the function of higher education more as developing a general problem solving ability, and although concerned with specific subject knowledge, it was often seen as irrelevant, or merely as a vehicle for teaching thinking skills and approaches to problem solving.

Although, both Chinese and western teachers feel that they have to promote academic development, the Chinese teachers believe they are also responsible for 'cultivating students' and promoting development in non-academic areas (Watkins, 2007). Chinese teachers regard teaching and learning as being holistic, seeing themselves as 'moral educators', who help students to understand their roles in society and to promote responsible moral behaviour. Many teachers in the UK would claim the same,

though there is an argument that much 'pastoral care' provided in British schools is concerned with social control (Galloway, 1990). Hargreaves (1982) has argued that the liberal ideal of holistic education was confined to the minority of elite schools.

Chinese teachers are expected to oversee their children's intellectual, academic and social development according to the curriculum, which extends far beyond the classroom. The conception of the holistic teacher was reflected in Ho's (2001) study. Twelve experienced secondary school teachers in Hong Kong and Australian schools were asked to respond to a number of student problem behaviours. The data from the questionnaires and interviews reflected cultural differences in perception of the teachers' role. Hong Kong teachers exhibited integrated personal teaching pertaining to areas of discipline, instruction and guidance, whereas for the Australian teacher, guidance efficacy turned out to be separate from discipline and instructions. In the Chinese context teachers have the moral responsibility to ensure good behaviour in students, not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom environment, thus, classified as the holistic teacher. Further, recent studies have also shown that observations of Chinese teachers being authoritarian may have been over generalized. Ho (2001) claimed that observation of Chinese teachers showed elements of student centeredness in their management of student problems.

In Korea there is a similar holistic view of teaching which conceptualises teaching not only as cognitive but also as affective and moral, and includes teaching children their place in society. It is suggested that teachers in Korea are respected because they have the ability to give children knowledge and also to 'mould the character of their students' (Sorenson, 1994; p. 29). The role of the teacher is crucially important and some have

likened their role and position to those of the King and the father. Sorenson (1994) described the student/teacher relationship as characterized as 'warm authoritarianism', demanding respect, but convincing students that they have their best interest in mind (p. 27). According to Sorenson, the Korean 'teachers' word is law (p. 27). Therefore, parents and students all assume that the teacher's proper role is to impart truth.

3.2.5 Overview.

This section has explored the literature identifying different notions and conceptual understandings of cultural views of teaching in the Asian classroom. The Asian continent is rich and very diverse in all areas like belief, values, culture and even language. But currently, Asian teaching and learning is in reality, 'East Asian' pedagogy with some exceptions. Most of the research that is published about Asian pedagogy tends to be studies involving participants from Japan and China (including Hong Kong). Of course there is nothing inherently wrong with studies from these countries, at least from the western perspective, as they are a welcome addition to the literature. But one of the unfortunate consequences of this reality is that 'Asian' becomes homogenized in the minds of many, and this is evident in the writing about education in Asia and elsewhere, as though there is some underlying consistency in the countries of Asia. Wikipedia (2012) suggests, culturally, there has been little unity or common history for many of the cultures and peoples of Asia (p. 75). But allowing research based on a few East Asian countries to represent 'Asian' pedagogy does little justice to the diversity that exists in the Asian continent. It is like saying that the countries in Europe are alike. Who in the world would say French culture is the same as German? As certainly, no one would agree

that Asian cultures and individuals are alike; there are vast similarities and differences across cultures and individuals. However, the world knows little about those differences and thinks it knows much about the similarities. Who in Asia would agree that Korean culture is the same as Japanese or Chinese? The differences, in fact are striking. The diversity is even larger across the Asian continent, from India to Philippines. Yet the literature often does this great diversity a huge injustice by not recognising it. Also, it is frustrating that researchers take findings from one or a few samples from one or a few countries in the Asian continent, especially East Asian, and make generalised interpretations about 'Asia' and 'Asian' in general. Therefore, in order to understand teachers' and students' behaviour, Korean cultural characteristics are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Korean cultural characteristics.

4.0 Introduction.

Alexander (2000) argues that approaches to pedagogy are deeply embedded in cultural traditions, with teachers often strongly attached to particular teaching styles and resistant to new initiatives. To explore and understand the Korean classroom, and to appreciate the teaching style, or understand the framework for teaching in each society, the cultural context is significant. As such, we must not only focus on the individual characteristics of the teacher, but must consider how the processes of teaching, and its relationship with contextual factors such as the values and beliefs of each individual in a community, are embedded within national cultural values. Each of these lines of inquiry helps us understand a particular facet of human learning and achievement, but together they make the compelling case that culture is an important source of variation in human learning processes and outcomes. It is imperative that teaching and learning processes are entrenched by the core values, beliefs, and attitudes of their culture.

As, Berliner (2005) suggests, understanding of educational perspectives and practices within their cultural context is fundamental to understanding how learning takes place. Thus, we need rich, complex and accurate descriptions of Korean culture and how these relate to the behaviour associated with members of these cultures. This chapter explores the Korean concept of *cheong*, *chemyeon*, *nunchi* and *hyodo* to further understand the regulations of the society and Korean cultural characteristics. This section also includes an examination of the structure of Korean language in relation to the individual.

4.1 Korean socio-cultural characteristics.

Culture is the interrelationship between individuals and their environment, leading people to behave in a specific and socially legitimate way. Thus, culture is necessary to participate and to make sense of the social environment. It is both a contextual and a cognitive phenomenon, where the context influences and creates human activity.

Vygotsky (1978) described learning as being embedded within social events and occurring as a child interacts with people, objects and events in the environment. As a result, the culture in which meaning is created or communicated has an influence on the ways in which possible meanings are understood. *Cheong*, *chemyeon*, *nunchi* and *hyodo* are Korean cultural concepts that help explain the cultural characteristics of Korean society and are explored below.

4.1.1 Cheong.

The Korean culture is also often called a culture of *cheong* (Choi & Choi, 2001; p. 69). There is no corresponding word in the English language to describe this concept. Choi & Choi's (2001) study illustrated the psychological functions, and described the structural patterns, that underpin *cheong* experiences among university students. *Cheong* is suggested as a social category which described the affective bond that unites and integrates group members together. It is also suggested as a social relationship, bridging the psychological gap between different individuals who have common self-interest. Moreover, it refers to a lingering feeling attached to people, objects, places or anything else individuals have come in contact with or experienced in their lives. However, *cheong*

is different from the western concept of altruism. *Cheong* implies that Korean people are sensitive to and are aware of each other's thoughts or emotions. However, this does not imply that they express and reveal their inner feelings, and thus they do not express their preferences or expectations.

This concept follows the Confucian ideology that regards human beings as being good natured, with the four virtues embedded in this nature. These are goals that individuals should pursue throughout their lives: generosity, righteousness, courtesy and wisdom. Kum (1998) argued that the mind exercises control over one's given nature and it conceives of human nature as given. Korean culture takes a socially oriented view of the self, where the individual mind should be congruent with social norms and goals. This perspective sees the individual as part of the whole. *Cheong* is no mediation between the individuality and society, but a state of 'we-ness'.

This relationship of 'we-ness' is characterized by a strong sense of bonding, unconditional friendship, self-sacrifice and exclusive favouritism (Choi, 1998). This bonding is considered to be '*cheong*' which is an affectionate feeling that describes a relational tie, and the bond between people, object and place.

4.1.2 Chemyeon.

'*Chemyeon*' or 'social face' has also been considered as a phenomenon reflecting Korean culture and social behaviour. The word *chemyeon* consists of *che* (body) and *myeon* (face). *Chemyeon* is defined as *dori* in the Korean language where the face is an

external expression of one's inner nature. The term face may be defined in western culture as:

'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is a self-delineated image in terms of approved social attributes - albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself' (Goffman, 2005; p. 5).

Chemyeon seems similar in the sense that, like face, it represents an image of a personal self. However, *chemyeon* can be claimed through social interaction and is in part negotiated and given by the society and in part by meeting the society's expectations. Thus, one tries to accept norms of behaviour and community expectations in one's social world to avoid losing *chemyeon*. *Chemyeon* involves both positive self-evaluation and social approval from others' evaluations of one's morality and ability, though the latter is more critical.

Choi & Lee's (2002) study examined the underlying structure of *chemyeon*. Undergraduate students (N=202) proposed personality, integrity, ability and authority as core components of the psychological processes embedded in the function of *chemyeon*. Further, Choi & Yu's (1992) investigation of the psychological structure of *chemyeon* demonstrated *chemyeon* is lost when:

- a) people violate the rules or norms suitable to their social status and position, (e.g. when one misconducts oneself);
- b) they fail to show ability commensurate with their social status and position (e.g. when professors lack knowledge);

- c) people behave inappropriately considering their social status and position (e.g. when one's weakness is open to others).

Back's (2010) study of Korean students indicated that the indirectness or passive behaviour and quiet nature of Korean students enrolled in UK universities are due to maintaining *chemyeon*. It was suggested that the students avoided face-to-face interaction in group or class discussion regardless of whether they agreed or not because they believed that expressing disagreement involved a high risk of losing face. This tendency was shown to increase when it came to hierarchy in teacher-student relationships. This was likely to have discouraged students from asking questions or expressing their views in the classroom because they were concerned about interrupting the teachers and also felt fretful that the teacher's face would be lost if the teachers were not able to answer their questions.

Chemyeon in Confucian societies has been understood as one's social face, and therefore influences the formation or maintenance of social relationships in Korea. Korean people are generally sensitive to others' feelings and also determined to maintain positive feelings (Choi and Kim, 2004).

Choi and Kim (2004) suggested that *chemyeon* in Confucian cultures is directly linked to the Confucian understanding of humanity, and is part of the standard of humanness. According to the Confucian model of the ideal human, losing social face induces, or results in, a sense of shame. It is more important to people of high status and is regulated by social norms. Ward (2007) suggested that *chemyeon* is maintained by oneself, and enhanced by others. Thus, *chemyeon* does not merely indicate an

individual's social role and position but also has connotations of an individual's prestige, dignity, honour and reputation (Choi, Kim and Kim; 1997).

4.1.3 Nunchi.

Korean people go to great lengths to avoid losing face and to help others avoid this as well by being aware of others' feelings. The concept of '*nunchi*' was brought up as a source of discomfort in a study of the adjustment behaviour of Korean nurses in the US (Yi et al, 2000). The nurses felt discomfort in non-face-to-face communication due to poor English language skills but also because they could not assess the other person's facial expression and the situation. It was a problem that the nurses could not read the other person's facial expression, especially over phone conversations. The nurses in this study described *nunchi* as:

'knowing what others need by just seeing their facial expressions' (Yi's et al, 2000; p. 725).

4.1.4 Hyodo.

'*Hyodo*' is Korean filial piety and is defined as:

'supporting and serving one's parents, and is a natural duty of a person' (Kim, 2008; p. 1).

Moreover, it is the rule of behaviour directing offspring to repay parental love and care. Confucian culture is a family-oriented culture, in which the family is placed above its individual members. The individual is nothing but a means for the wellbeing of the

family; thus *chemyeon* means saving face for the family, and the shame reflects the whole family, not just individual members as mentioned above. This sense of shame basically emerges from consciousness of failure to fulfil self-realization. The shame is intimately interrelated with the guilty feeling intrinsic to human beings. This inner conscious is the '*tao*' which is the inner experience, an intuitive awareness, rather than an intellectual process (Lee, 1999). In Korea, it is the consciousness of human nature called '*yang-sim*' which literally means 'conscious' in English.

Therefore, the greatest shame at losing social face is located in the family context, especially of the child's lack of filial piety to his parents. In Sung's (1998) questionnaire study, respondents (N=162) established six categories of the most important components of filial piety as judged by children:

- 1) showing respect;
- 2) fulfilling responsibility;
- 3) harmonizing family;
- 4) making repayment;
- 5) showing affection;
- 6) and making sacrifice.

The most important reasons for children to practice filial piety are closely connect to family orientation and a child must be able to uphold her or his obligation to the family.

'Koreans are taught that filial piety is the basis of all conducts' (Shin and Koh, n.d; p. 1) and the educational process is derived from this principle.

Park and Kim's (2006) study reflected the close parent-child relationship. Korean children's close relationship continues into their adulthood. They feel gratitude, respect, and indebtedness towards their parents and are much less likely to feel conflict, regardless of age. Thus, in return for their parents' dedication, '*hyodo*' is an obligation. This also includes making sacrifices and repayment to the family. Children have to be resolutely obedient to their parents, to serve and please them not only during their lifetime, but giving them a good funeral, and worshiping them after death (Sorenson, 1994; Sung, 1992). This pattern has been found in a series of studies examining parent-child relationships in Korea (Kim, U et al; 2005). Sung (1992) showed that the role of the Korean child is to love and respect the parents by studying and working hard to obtain a promising and secure future for their family. Accordingly, (as discussed above in Section 4.1.2), '*chemyeon*' in Korean society sees learning as a moral duty and studying hard is a responsibility to the family (Schneider and Lee, 1990; Siu, 1992).

As a result, the pressure to succeed academically is felt by students irrespective of the parents' educational level and is very much a matter of family *chemyeon*. Jobs and occupations are regarded as more than a source of income in Korean society. It is the Confucian view that education is the way to perfection and, thus, the measure of self-worth (Sorensen, 1994). The outcome of the child becomes a symbol of great pride for the family, to hold up the family *chemyeon*. Thus, parents work hard to support their children and as a result have high expectations for them. These expectations can weigh heavily on the Korean students (Sorenson, 1994). Since Korean children represent the dignity of their family and are closely knit, shame and guilt play important roles in motivating the student (Paik, 2001). Pai et al (1987) found that 88% of South Korean

adolescents wanted to make their parents proud of them and, in consequence, viewed school performance as their worst pressure.

Yang's (2008) in-depth interview study illustrated the intrinsic relationship of the Korean parent and child. The study of married couples (N=17) with more than one child argued that children should be taught to behave, and were given explicit examples of proper behaviour. They were especially taught to fulfil their filial obligation which was to recognize and bring honour on the family. The parents in this study tended to emphasize 'family education' in their child-rearing practices. The term family education or teaching has been used synonymously with rearing in Korea. Thus, children's actions were perceived as direct reflections of parents' own worthiness and people often judged the success of others by achievements of their children. If a child does not behave or shows bad manners, traditionally it is viewed as reflection of poor family education. Parents are often criticized for not being able to teach their child properly.

4.1.5 Overview.

This section of the review of literature has described the values and rules of social interaction of the traditional Korean concepts *cheong*, *chemyeon*, *nunchi* and *hyodo*. *Cheong* is described as the affective bond that unites groups of people together and an attachment to objects, places or things that the person has come in contact with. *Chemyeon* reflects Korean social behaviour and is seen as a product of socialization and of the internalization of social norms or customs. It is the reflection of how one should behave in different situations in a manner befitting to the social values people share. It is also the collective image or representation that a person values and shares with others, the

social value a person claims for them-self in a particular interpersonal interaction, and has a prescriptive nature that directs how people should behave in social relations. It is suggested that one of the greatest losses of *chemyeon* is located in the family, when the child does not uphold *hyodo* to the family. *Hyodo* is argued as an obligation for the child to behave by pleasing the parents by respecting, working hard and achieving academic greatness.

Also, it was shown that Korean people go to great lengths to avoid losing *chemyeon* and to help others avoid this as well and this leads to the concept of having *nunchi*. *Nunchi* is described as the reading or being aware of the other person's thought or emotion and/or having an understanding of the situation or the affair by observing the circumstances. This suggests that Korean communication is non-confrontational and values harmonious relationships. It reflects the hierarchical relationship and status of the Korean culture which regulates the behaviour of society.

This exploration of Korean cultural concepts helps explain the characteristic behaviour in Korean society. The next section explores Korean language and the impact it has on the conception of the individual, and provides a brief overview of the development of the Korean language.

4.2 Impact of language.

People use language to express, create and interpret meaning and to maintain social and interpersonal relationships. It is language that makes it possible for people to

objectify and conceptualise themselves in the world and make sense of the environment, objects, experiences, events and interactions.

The language used affects the way people reason, even when culture and testing location are controlled for, suggesting that different representations are associated with different languages and that language can serve as a cuing effect for reasoning style. It is suggested that people from different cultures tend to focus on different things when thinking about objects. Ji et al (2004) studied 119 Chinese students at Beijing University, 43 European American students and 131 Chinese students from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore who were studying at the University of Michigan. Ji et al investigated whether there were any cultural differences in categorization independent of language and whether there were any language effects independent of culture. There was a substantial effect on the way participants grouped objects. Chinese participants grouped objects more on the basis of relationships and less on the basis of category membership than did European Americans. Furthermore, the study found a substantial language effect among Mainland and Taiwan Chinese. When tested in Chinese, they grouped objects primarily on the basis of relationships, but when tested in English, their groupings were much less relationship based. This study illustrated that language is used not only to represent but also to create and sustain a speaker's expectations, beliefs, attitudes, practices and moral values about the world. Extending this argument to my own study, Ji et al illustrated the importance of understanding the Korean language and the impact that it has on culture and society.

4.2.1 Development of Korean language.

Firstly, the historical development of Korean is explored to understand the progression of the Korean language. Korea has been under the influence of Chinese culture for thousands of years, and as such, '*hanja*' (Chinese script) was used for scholarly writing. The Chinese written script (Chinese characters) was used exclusively in Korea until the middle of the 15th century (Chang & Chang, 1994; p. 9).

Although the Korean script '*Hangul*' was developed in 1446 by King Sejong as a means of spreading literacy among the Korean people, conflict arose regarding the usage of both characters, as the Chinese characters were considered more scholarly and more acceptable amongst the upper class (Sohn, 2006). Eventually, *hangul* was accepted and used nationwide. Nonetheless, there continues to be considerable public debate about the role of *hanja* in Korean text. The proportion of usage of *hanja* differs from writer to writer. However school children are expected to learn 1,800 *hanja* characters by the end of high school (MEST, 2009). In most modern literature, writing is mostly in *hangul*; however, some academic papers and official documents tend to be written in a mixture of both *hangul* and *hanja*.

4.2.2 Korean language structure.

According to Sohn (2006), the Korean script '*hangul*' is an agglutinative language where most words are formed by joining morphemes together. For example, verb information such as tense, mood and the social relations between the speaker and listener is added successively to the end of the verb. As seen on Table 4.1, the Korean alphabet

hangul consist of forty letters: ten pure vowel, eleven compound vowels, fourteen basic consonants and five double consonant. Currently, Korean vocabulary consists of approximately 30% native, 65% Sino- Korean (Chinese character based) and 5% loanwords. Loan words are borrowed, absorbed and nativized expressions from other languages such as English.

As a general rule, Korean letters are formed with strokes from top to bottom and from left to right. The letters forming a syllable have a sequence of CV(C)(C) and they are arranged as a rebus: e.g. 가: /ka/ means 'go'; 닭: /dak/ means 'chicken'. Moreover, a vowel in Korean cannot be written separately e.g. 아 : /a/ and 이 : /i/ thus, the absence of a consonant is represented by 'ㅇ' consonant so, /a/ is written as 아 and /i/ is written as '이'. Hence, the word /ai/ meaning 'child' consists of a consonant and a vowel and is written as '아이'.

According to Song (1997), Korean is quite easy to learn phonetically as it is characterized by the absence of grammatical gender, articles, inflections and related pronouns commonly found in other languages. The functions of nouns in a clause is indicated by case marker or particles attached to the end of the nominal. Also, the word order or syntax follows the sequence of subject, object and verb. Whereas, in English, the word order generally follows the sequence of subject, verb and object. For example, saying 'I like you' in Korean may sound like 'I you like'.

<i>Letter</i>	<i>Transcription</i>	<i>Letter</i>	<i>Transcription</i>
Pure vowels:			
ㅣ	/i/	ㅡ	/ü/
ㅑ	/e/	ㅓ	/ə/
ㅓ	/æ/	ㅕ	/a/
ㅕ	/ü/	ㅗ	/u/
ㅗ	/ö/	ㅛ	/o/
Compound vowels:			
ㅗ	/ya/	ㅛ	/wa/
ㅓ	/yæ/	ㅕ	/wæ/
ㅑ	/yə/	ㅗ	/wə/
ㅕ	/ye/	ㅓ	/we/
ㅛ	/yo/	ㅕ	/üi/
ㅗ	/yu/		
Consonants:			
ㄱ	/k/	ㅇ	/ŋ/
ㄴ	/n/	ㅈ	/c/
ㄷ	/t/	ㅊ	/c ^h /
ㄹ	/l/	ㅋ	/k ^h /
ㅁ	/m/	ㅌ	/t ^h /
ㅂ	/p/	ㅍ	/p ^h /
ㅅ	/s/	ㅎ	/h/
Double consonants:			
ㅌ	/s' /	ㅍ	/s' /
ㅍ	/t' /	ㅈ	/c' /
ㅍ	/p' /		

Table 4.1 Korean alphabet: Hangul

4.2.3 Structure of society.

The phonology of the Korean language may be simple but the pragmatics and cultural practices embedded in the Korean language are complex. Sohn (2006) describes Korean as a:

‘macro to micro language in that the universe is represented in the order of a set macro and then its member’s micro’ (p. 16).

In other words, a bigger unit is followed by a smaller unit in linguistic expression. This characteristic is manifested and also reflects the structure and configuration of Korean society. For example, Korean names are written in the order of, first, the family name or surname, then the personal given name, e.g. Smith John, unlike in English where the family name or surname is written after the given name, e.g. John Smith. The address is also in this order structure, written from order of country, county, city, street and then house/apartment number.

Moreover, the Korean language has many different rules of usage for different social settings. These rules are applied according to the level of intimacy, the status of the persons involved and the particular context. They reflect the cultural norm that social status creates the hierarchical relationships in society, which in turn create harmony and clearly define the place of each person in society in relation to others. These aspects are further discussed as follows.

First, the Korean language emphasizes authority and reflects social status. This is reflected in the extensive honorifics system built into the language. The relationship between the speaker and the addressee or the referent of the subject is dependent on the word choice and sentence. According to Sohn (2006), the patterns of Korean honorific language are extraordinarily systematic, even if it is not perhaps the most systematic of the world's known languages. Through various speech levels, certain honorific nouns, verbs, and adjectives, a speaker is able to reflect the level of familiarity or the difference in social rank between the addressee and the speaker. In Korea, you will never call someone older, including a teacher, by their first name. The honorific suffix -*님* /-nim is

affixed to many terms to make them honorific. These markers are a form of address that show respect towards the referent titles, such as Sir, Doctor, and Professor etc. Thus, the term for teacher is 선생/*seonsaeng* and when referring to your teacher it is 선생님/*seonsaengnim* which means respected teacher. It is not permissible for students even to use and add surname to that title, for example, *Lee kyosu nim*/ Professor Lee. In Byon's (2006) study, the students were instructed to use the title *seonsaengnim* when referring to the teacher at the very beginning of the semester, indicating and situating the status difference between the teacher and the students.

All languages may contain certain honorifics, such as sir or madam in English; however, in Korean the honorifics are an inherent part of the language and culture. Honorifics are typically tied to traditional and the hierarchal societies with a very specific class system. A sentence cannot be expressed without the speaker's knowledge of the different forms of expression, and thus different speech levels are dependent on the person spoken to as well as the person spoken about.

The participants in Shin's (2010) study showed differences between social settings in children's conversations with their teacher. The data were based on interviews and observations of six children and a Sunday school teacher. The children switched spoken language from English to Korean when speaking to the teacher. Thus, when addressing and referring to the teacher, whose rank was higher than the children, they spoke Korean as it contains some aspect of honorific marking to express respect and deference to the older person. The value system of Korea is based on Confucianism, where it has been the foundation of ethics, morals and lifestyles. The teachings of Confucius suggest ideal

relationships between members of various social categories. For example between the king and his people there should be righteousness; between husband and wife there should be difference; between older and younger there should be order; between parents and children there should be affection and between friends, mutual trust. Thus a person of lower status uses a different form of the Korean language when addressing someone of higher status. Each of these relationships, except between friends, has shaped the hierarchical order of Korean society (Sohn, 2006). The teacher-student interactions are consistent with hierarchism in Byon's (2006) study. The teacher frequently used directive structure *-(u)sey-yo* when teaching and interacting with the students in class; this indicated the assertive directive category which is associated with a teacher's duty and authority.

The hierarchical order, relationship and status were also illustrated in Kang's (2003) study of two Korean American interactional accounts of conflict negotiation discourse. Kang showed that the use of kinship terms, hedging (word/sound to soften disagreement) and code switching served to perpetuate the ideology of relative status in Korean and Korean American interaction. Using Korean evoked a way of carrying out and interpreting social interaction that may not be available through the use of English alone. Grammar in Korean usage, prevails on the speaker to take into consideration certain relevant social relationships and categories. Here the use of Korean in a bilingual context provides a resource for negotiating conflict by establishing hierarchical relations in interaction. Kang (2003) stated:

'Social hierarchy in Korean culture obliges individuals to take on certain social roles and behave according to certain social norms' (p. 318).

Hence, Korean is embedded with cultural norms and behaves according to the social role associated with each individual's status.

Second, the hierarchical Korean society believes that harmony occurs when people know their relational status and behave accordingly. Thus, Korean children are taught to display their respect to others by using appropriate honorifics. Harmonious relationships are valued and communications are rarely direct or confrontational. One talks around an issue, and relies on the other's sensitivity to understand the point of a conversation. This concept is called '*nunchi*' and is highly developed in Korean society (discussed in greater depth in Section 4.1.3). It describes the guessing of other people's emotion and feeling (Choi, and Choi, 1994). *Nunchi* may represent a mixed feeling that combines love, respect, affinity and loyalty; however, it is associated with being attentive to another's needs, attempting to know and be sensitive to what the other would feel and think, and with maintaining harmonious shared experience (Choi, Kim, and Choi, 1993).

Holtgraves (1997) illustrated the indirect nature of Korean culture. In a comparative study of Korean undergraduate (N=186) and American undergraduate students (N=200), Korean students scored significantly higher than Americans on the interpretation and production dimensions. Thus, according to this data, the Korean people are motivated to collectively manage the 'face' (or public identity) of each other, and they do this by phrasing their remarks politely. A primary linguistic mechanism for politeness and face management is indirectness. The face threat of a speech act is lessened when it is performed indirectly (e.g., 'It seems warm in here' as a request to have a window opened) rather than directly (e.g., 'Open the window'). Hence, Korean culture values harmony.

Communications between people are non-confrontational and they usually talk around an issue, having *nunchi*.

Third, Korean language clearly defines an individual's place in relation to others in a given situation. Essentially, power variables and speech levels are largely dependent upon such factors as a person's social relationship to the addressee with reference to social status, gender, age, kinship, familiarity and achieved or ascribed status. These variables function as sociocultural constraints, which in turn restrict the choice of the individual. On the other hand, solidarity variables refer to intimacy, in-groupness, and informality, which can often be manipulated and controlled by individuals' communicative skills. In every society, these two concepts interact with each other; the former broadens the gap between people while the latter narrows the gap (Sohn, 1986 in Byon, 2003; p. 271).

In Yoon's (1996) case study, evidence showed more Korean language usage with the out-group members and more frequent use of English language with the in-group members. The group membership is an important factor which determines the degree of use of one language or the other. This study has shown that the more distant the relationships between people, the more likely they are to use Korean language during their conversation. Conversely, the more intimate the relationship they have, the more they use English.

It seems language is more than knowing the vocabulary and grammar, as it is inseparable from culture. Every culture has evolved a set of symbols associated with different perceptions of situations and experiences. Thus, these symbols may occur in

different forms which can be verbal or nonverbal, written or unwritten, including anything that conveys a meaning such as words on the page, drawing pictures and even gestures like tilt of the head or eye contact. There are multiple codes or ways of speaking. The social roles and positions they occupy, as well as the social roles and positions of those whom they address, are reflected in speech and writing. It is clear that the Korean language finely defines human relationships and those social statuses are reflected in the language used. Language functions as a medium through which we are able to communicate.

4.2.4 Non- verbal language.

Non-verbal behaviour parallels this hierarchal verbal/written expression mentioned above. Kim's (1977) study, examined cross-cultural differences and misunderstandings in American and Korean non-linguistic communication. This study not only showed that Americans and Koreans speak differently; it illustrated explicitly how they think and express their emotions, how they act interpersonally and how they follow the many hidden rules that govern conduct. For example, thumbs up in America mean 'ok' but in Korea it means 'you are number one' or 'the best'. Also one bows to a senior person, such as to a professor when greeting or leaving and a student bows when entering the classroom in the presence of the teacher. Whereas, bowing to the teacher or professor does not occur in western classrooms.

Another difference in non-verbal communication is eye contact among the people. Eye contact in Korea is a little complex. People in Korea do not look someone directly in the eye, especially children when spoken to by an adult like a teacher, because eye

contact effectively declares that you are of an equal social status to them. Although someone who has difficulty establishing eye contact with peers would most likely be considered shy, having strong eye contact is considered rude when dealing with someone of higher societal status. On the other hand, as in many western countries, having eye contact is considered polite and shows that you are taking an interest in what the other person has to say and are actually paying attention. In Yi's et al (2000) study, nurses showed difficulty adjusting to US non-verbal behaviour such as when to smile and when to make adequate eye contact with others. In the interviews, the nurses communicated their discomfort because:

'smiles are usually considered to be untrustworthy and eye contact is considered impolite and arrogant' (p. 725).

4.2.5 Concept of self.

Whorf (1956) has hypothesised that the patterns of the language we speak largely determine the patterns of our thought processes and ultimately of our culture, and therefore claims that our view of the world is determined by language. Korean language reveals the intricate relationships between the language and its culture. This is highlighted when one looks at the concept of self. The English concept of self-denotes 'I'. However, when this concept of the self is introduced in Korean there is not an equivalent meaning in the western understanding of this word. The closest Korean word would be *자/가/chakee/* (self) or *나/na/* (I). This does not mean that there is a conceptual lack of the concept of self, but there is a preference to use the terms 'we' and 'our', as opposed to the terms 'I' and 'my', even when the latter is more suitable (Choi, 1994).

There are however, polite equivalents to these pronouns ‘me’ and ‘I’. For example *저/jeo* is the polite/humble form of *나/na* and means ‘I’ in English.

Choi and Choi (1994) suggested several reasons for the Korean reserved attitude toward using ‘I’ in verbal/written expression. They suggested that people are seen as individualistic if they use ‘I’ in social interactions in Korea. Individualism is almost identical to egotism in the eyes of Koreans (Choi and Choi, 1994). On similar lines, emphasis on oneself is interpreted as excluding or rejecting the other person from the social and situational context. It is suggested that other people are seen in relation to ‘me’ thus, in these circumstances people use ‘we’ rather than ‘I’.

In addition, *저희/jeohui* is the polite/humble form of *우리/uri* meaning ‘we’. Also, the word for ‘you’, *너/neo* is not frequently used as it is impolite, thus other terms where possible are substituted or the word is not used. In contrast in the English language the pronoun ‘you’ is used to refer alike to the old and the young, to the president and to the children. In the Korean language ‘you’ is used depending upon the level of politeness and upon the relationship. Most of all, there is a preferential use of other terms like ‘student’, ‘aunt’ or ‘professor’ instead of the word ‘you’. This applies even in two person communication because it clarifies and accentuates the relationships between the two communicators better than the simple second person reference. The generalized ‘you’ does not seem to be appropriate in most communication situations in Korea. *우리/Uri* means ‘us’ in English and the English equivalent is ‘our’. ‘Uri’ in Korean denotes and includes the group. However, in Korean it is a word used to describe a group of people such as ‘our’ family, an entity as ‘our’ nation and possessions, as ‘our’ house (Farver and

Shin, 1997). In English, the more suitable term would be ‘my’ family, ‘my’ nation and ‘my’ house when describing ‘your’ nation, home and family.

Kim’s (2009) study of personal pronouns in two British and two Korean newspapers showed differences of usage in interpersonal aspects of discourse. In the English texts, the choice of ‘you’ and ‘we’ showed the writer’s attitude towards the reader. However, in the Korean texts ‘we’ was predominantly employed instead of ‘you,’ reflecting the characteristic features of the Korean culture where politeness between people is highly valued.

Also, the behavioural characteristic of formality in Korean honorific and the non-confrontational aspects of the language were reflected in Farver and Shin’s (1997) study of social pretend play in Korean and Anglo American pre-schoolers. It was noticed that Korean children were more involved with greater formality and the honorific forms of the Korean language when pretending to be a high status character and children were shown to be non-confrontational in their play. The children’s play reflected the social conventions and rules for behaviour that they had learned from the adults in their culture. It seems that:

‘Language is far more than words, and communication requires far more than language alone’ (Smith, Jr in Kim, 1977; p. 20).

Whorf (1956) also argued that culture and language are not separable and that culture, through language, influences people’s thinking. Moreover, he argued that linguistic patterns (such as grammars) in different languages have an impact on people’s habitual thinking. According to Whorf, the differences in linguistic structures between

languages are reflected in ‘habitual’ thought and ‘habitual’ behaviour. This suggests that specific vocabulary reflects a culture, and that language and/or body language can both reflect and influence a culture. According to Sohn (2006), language and communication represent and reflect the culture and society of the speaker.

Thus, language is a medium for transmitting and internalising culture. Consequently, it is generally agreed that language and culture are closely related in the sense that language expresses and transmits culture, while culture influences language. Culture and language are therefore embedded in each other and it is not easy to separate the two. As such the relationship between language and culture is deeply engrained where language is used to maintain and convey culture and different ideas stem from differing language use within one’s culture.

4.2.6 Overview.

Language is a way of seeing, understanding and communicating about the world. By examining the Korean language system, specifically the honorific structure, the concept of ‘self’ and *nunchi*, and its communicative use, we can understand the socio-cultural nature of that language. By socio-cultural nature, we mean the underlying values, attitudes, and ways of thinking and patterns of social organisation.

The cultural context matters, as it is a key aspect of how students and teachers think, talk, learn, and define themselves. It is shown that in Korean culture social status is reflected in the language used and in use of communicative strategies that minimize social conflict. Thus, to understand the Korean classroom it is crucial to explore socio-

cultural values, historical background, cultural upbringing and beliefs as well as all the experiences that each teacher and each student brings to the classroom.

4.3 Conclusion and Research aims.

The review of literature has shown that educational research reveals variations and controversy within and between all educational systems. This section identifies weakness and gaps which have developed into, and helped to establish, the research questions. This section concludes the review of literature and presents the research objectives.

The review of literature has been conducted at various levels. For example, a macro level system measures quantifiable outcomes of standardised testing, and is intended to measure performance which offers a better understanding of the whole education system. On the other hand, studies concentrating on the micro level system, explore face to face interaction. Nevertheless, studies concentrating on just one aspect, like the macro level system or the micro level system may not always be sufficient to give details of the whole picture. They may fail to capture the complex process of cultural and linguistic socialisation that teachers and students bring with them when they come into the classroom. In other words, examining just the national education system or just examining the classroom environment of teachers' and students' behaviour may not illustrate the whole picture. The ways in which we understand teaching and learning are framed by time and place: in other words pedagogy, like knowledge, is culturally situated and as such, is framed by the social, political and historical context. Alexander's (2000) study of 'culture and pedagogy' in five different nations argued that pedagogy does not

begin and end in the classroom; therefore the macro and micro contexts are inseparable.

Michael Sadler suggested:

'... the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside ... and govern and interpret the things inside' (Sadler, 1990, cited in Higginson, 1979; p. 50).

Biggs and Watkins (2001) reaffirmed the significance of the historical and traditional socio-cultural context in exploring the characteristics of the classrooms. Bronfenbrenner (1989) also argued that the elements of the system affect each other and, since the classroom is an environment in which all of the components affect each other, it is both appropriate and necessary to explore the classroom as a system within the larger system of school which, in turn, is embedded in the system of the community. Therefore, there is a need to study not only the characteristic of teachers' and students' behaviour in the classroom context but also to explore the larger environmental factors like the historical makeup, socio-cultural and national values, and what effect these have on the teacher and student.

The review of literature has also illustrated that Korea has tended to be treated as part of either China or Japan due to the close geographical proximity of these larger nations. It has been generally suggested that Korea and other East Asian societies, such as, Japan and China (including Hong Kong), exhibit similar cultural characteristics and social values, because of their Confucian philosophical values. This has been given as a reason to study Korea as part of China or Japan due to the many similarities among these countries (Hofstede, 1991). It has, however, led to misunderstandings and over-generalisation of the Asian culture. Although these nations share common characteristics,

the cultural characteristics of a particular group are distinctive. Since each Asian nation developed separately and has undergone changes due to its underlying socio-economic history and structural development, the differences between them may be considerable. This diversity may be characterised by various ethnic and cultural distinctions of language, belief and values. The clarification and the nature and specific properties of Korean culture can be understood through its own uniqueness and culturally based differences. Through examination of the Korean language and culture, the specific properties of Korean society can be understood. The honorific language has been shown to reflect the structure of Korean society and has contributed to social relationships which specify the class system. This includes the concept of self and the frequent use of the word 'we' in place of 'I'. This is to avoid being individualistic in the eye of the Korean society, as people are seen in relation to me. Thus, the Korean language internalises and transmits Korean culture. Further, the literature showed a number of ways that people in Korean society behaved and expressed themselves which were culture bound and influenced by specific cultural situations. The most specific cultural behaviour is *chemyeon*, which reflects the formation and maintenance of social relationship and affects people's behaviour to work hard, be dedicated and behave to maintain *hyodo*. These specific culturally bound influences on social behaviour may further illuminate understanding of teachers' and students' behaviour in the Korean classroom.

Third, it is suggested in the review of literature that western constructs of the Asian education system, especially pedagogy, have frequently been based on western models or been looked at through a western lens. Often the stereotypical images have created a polarity and have been grouped in binary terms which also exaggerate reality. Thus, the

western model of the Asian classroom and the teaching and learning in these educational systems are often misinterpreted and have created stereotypical images that generalise across Asia. We view the world through the lenses of our conceptions and those conceptions are interpreted on basis of our understanding and cultural views. As western and Asian cultures differ, our position and responses are affected by our conceptions of the world. Therefore, views of Asian classrooms, specifically Korean classrooms, should not be based on western models of teaching and learning but should be based on the local context.

Fourth, the review of literature showed examples of the ways certain nations such as Korea have looked towards other nations that are considered to have an effective education system for inspirations to help change and improve the existing system. These included studies run by large international testing programmes which have been used for policy purposes with the intention that the imported policy or practice will bring about automatic change upon implementation. However, the review of literature showed that policies or practices simply imported into existing systems tend to be unsuccessful because the current educational system and cultural values of the society have not been taken into proper consideration. Thus, the Korean classroom needs to be understood in its context in order to provide a basis for future action.

Further, despite much available research that illuminates many important aspects of how people in China, Hong Kong, Japan and western cultures learn and achieve, and their conceptions of learning and achievement, there has been relatively little attention, if any, that concentrates on Korea and its educational system, especially the Korean native

conception of teaching and learning. It is suggested that teaching and learning are culture dependent (Li, 2002) and different cultures may have different points of view, giving different meanings to teaching and answers to the questions as to what strategies to use when studying and learning (Watkins, 2007). Teaching is a mode of cultural transmission that varies across cultures (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992; Stigler and Hiebert, 1999) and activity settings (Cole and Cole, 2001).

Although Korea is a part of Asia and may show similar cultural characteristics, Korea differs considerably from other Asian countries. Each culture has different norms, values and expectations, and these cultural differences affect educational practices. Thus, in order to understand its dominant ideas, values and beliefs, and especially to understand the impact that these have on the activity in classrooms, Korean classroom should be examined in their national cultural context.

Therefore, based on the conclusions of the review of literature, the following research questions were drawn up. This research sets out to explore and answer the following questions:

1. Is there a common pedagogy in a sample of national primary schools in Seoul?
2. If so, what are its distinctive features?
3. How does the current social and cultural context of Korea influence the common pedagogy in primary state schools in Seoul?

The research questions focus on the exploration of Korean classrooms in order to show whether there is a common pedagogy in the Korean primary school classroom as suggested in the review of literature. This study examines a sample of Korean primary schools in context as a systemic whole, focusing on the contribution of culture, history and society in relation to the pedagogy that makes Korean education what it is today. Specifically, it will explore the interplay of politics, policy and practice in how teaching and learning both reflect and mediate the fundamental assumptions embedded within culture, since students' understanding and teachers' decisions are influenced by numerous external forces such as historical formation, national political goals, society and cultural forces. Here, pedagogy will not be considered merely as an instructional process, but as a far more complex process, where interaction in the classroom is continually reconstructed, in that the actions are not ones where the action determines the next situation, but are determined by the effect of outside requirements.

Thus the research questions lead to an examination of Korean pedagogy in national primary classrooms in Korea and of the relationship between this pedagogy and the socio-cultural context of Korea.

-Part 3- Methodology

Chapter 5 - Methodology

- Focus group interview

Chapter 6 - Questionnaire

Chapter 7 - Observation/follow-up interview

Chapter 8 - Reliability and validity

- Ethical consideration

Chapter 5: Methodology.

5.0 Introduction.

The main aim of the study as stated in Chapter 4 was to investigate primary state education in Korea, specifically the contribution of national culture, and historical and social aspects on pedagogy. Part three examines the methodology and the design used in the study. The use of both exploratory mixed methods of research and grounded theory methodology in the study are explored. The choice of design was influenced by the need to collect the most appropriate data that would help to achieve the aim of the study and to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a common pedagogy in a sample of national primary schools in Seoul?
2. If so, what are its distinctive features?
3. How does the current social and cultural context of Korea influence the common pedagogy in primary state schools in Seoul?

There were three stages to data collection. Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical framework for the overall research methodology underpinning the study. This is followed by discussion of the use of focus groups for the first stage of data collection. The rationales for the quantitative questionnaire methodology in the second stage and the systematic observations and interviews in the third stage of the research are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

5.1 Mixed methods.

It is argued that the research design or methodology is determined by the nature of the research question under investigation (Robson, 2002). Methodology is concerned with ways of thinking about and studying social reality. Harding (1987) defined methodology as:

‘a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed’ (p. 2- 3).

This study uses a mixed methods approach to explore distinctive features of Korean pedagogy and the effect of socio-cultural values on teachers’ and students’ behaviours. Mixed method is an evolving methodology with a growing taxonomy that reflects both the research design and philosophical assumptions of the research process. Mixed method is defined by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) as:

‘the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study’ (p. 17).

Mixed methods adopt a pragmatic stance and believe that multiple paradigms can be used to address research problems. The basis for this approach is that the world should be regarded and apprehended as actual by the researcher, rather than the researcher changing epistemological grounds to fit the problems (Teddie et al, 2003; Howe, 1988). The pragmatic approach offers a logical and practical alternative as it moves past the paradigm debate. In other words, the mixed methods use of multiple approaches in answering the research questions does not restrict or constrain researchers’ choices. Patton (1990) argues:

'Rather than believing that one must choose to align with one paradigm or the other, I advocate a paradigm of choices. A paradigm of choices rejects methodological orthodoxy in favour of methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality. The issue is whether one has made sensible methods decisions given the purpose of the inquiry, the questions being investigated, and the resources available. The paradigm of choices recognizes that different methods are appropriate for different situations' (p. 38).

According to this belief, researchers are justified, where they need to collect data from multiple sources, in using different strategies, approaches, and methods in such a way that the resulting combination is likely to result in complementary strengths.

5.1.1 Sequential exploratory design.

According to Creswell (2003), there are many ways of using mixed methods, for instance one might collect information by using each method concurrently (at the same time), or sequentially (one method informs another, say interviewing before surveying). These two approaches are different. The first is more like two parallel studies that only come together when the data are being analysed, whereas, in the second, the aim is to use the methods in a more integrated way. The actual methods used may be the same, but the ways in which they are sequenced and combined can make a big difference to the process of conducting the study and the results.

The context of Korean classrooms is unfamiliar and under-researched and Creswell's (2003) model of sequential exploratory design (see Figure 5.1) fits the purpose of this study. It is characterised by an initial phase of qualitative data collection and analysis, a

qualitative procedure which explores unknown fields. It is then followed by a phase of quantitative data collection. It was assumed in this study that the use of a qualitative approach would generate insights and identify issues. As such, the study began with a set of focus group interviews utilizing a grounded theory approach (which is further discussed in Section 5.1.2) in order to allow for the emergence of research categories or themes during the initial stage of research. The intention of this exploratory design is that the results of the first method (qualitative) can help develop or inform the second method (quantitative). These developments connect the initial qualitative phase to the subsequent quantitative component of the study. Then, the findings from the qualitative stage can be tested on a larger sample in the quantitative method so that generalization can be achieved (Morgan, 1998). After the questionnaire survey, a further stage of quantitative data collection can be used to add detail to the findings from previous data.

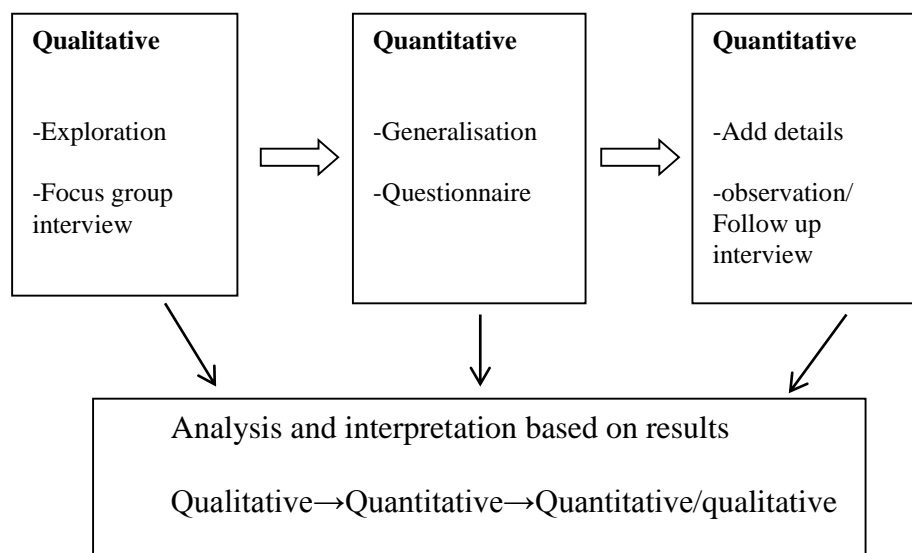


Figure 5.1 based on Creswell (2003) -The Exploratory Design

In other words, focus groups explore the field, the questionnaire investigates the findings and aims to generalise to a larger sample and finally, classroom observation and interviews can then add further detail to the findings. Green et al (1989) point out:

‘the underlying rationale for mixed method inquiry is to understand more fully, to generate deeper and broader insights, and to develop important knowledge claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspectives’ (p. 258).

5.1.2 Grounded theory.

A grounded theory method offers a suitable approach to facilitate this study. Stern (1995) argued:

‘the strongest case for the use of grounded theory is in investigations of relatively uncharted water, or to gain a fresh perspective in a familiar situation’ (p. 30).

According to Lee (1995, cited in Kim and Cho, 2005), there has only been a limited amount of research conducted in Korea using qualitative approaches since the widespread adoption of these methods in the 1990s. Lee described Korean schooling as virgin territory:

‘Korean schooling was either the place for testing Western theories or a place of ignorance on the part of Korean theorists’ (cited in Kim and Cho, 2005; p. 371).

Accordingly, since the features of specifically Korean education, Korean pedagogy and the relationships they foster in the classroom are unclear, a grounded theory approach seemed to be an appropriate method for:

'developing theoretical insights' (Glaser, 1978; p. 3).

Grounded theory is an interpretative research methodology that is useful in generating research based knowledge (Glaser, 1978). The advantage of Grounded theory for this study is that it explains what is actually happening in practical life at particular times, rather than simply describing what should be going on. Thus, it provides a structure without sacrificing flexibility.

Grounded theory can describe and explain the system under study and is also a methodology for developing theory that is:

'grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed' (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; p. 273).

The Korean context can be investigated to help understand Korean education as the aim is to:

'discover patterns and processes and understand how a group of people define, via their social interactions, their reality' (Stern et al, 1982 cited in Cutcliffe, 2000; p. 1477).

Due to the interplay between data collection and analysis phases, theory develops and evolves during the research process (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss' (1967) definition of grounded theory is that it will:

'...fit the situation being researched and work when put into use. By fit we mean that the categories must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study; by work we mean that they must be meaningfully relevant and be able to explain the behaviour under study' (p. 3).

The primary objective of this application of grounded theory is to find an explanation of a phenomenon, which is the relationship between pedagogy and related conditions such as culture, by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon, and categorizing the relationships of those elements to the context. In other words, the goal is to go from the general to the specific, without losing sight of what makes the subject of a study unique. Strauss and Corbin (1994) suggested that grounded theory supports the action of initial data collection and analysis before attempting to incorporate research literature. Thus, the analysis is based on the data collected and pre-existing constructs do not influence the analysis.

In grounded theory, data collection and analysis are consciously combined as initial data analysis is used to shape continuing data collection; thus analysis and theory formulation are fundamentally connected. This is intended to provide the researcher with opportunities to increase the ‘saturation’ of recurring categories, as well as to assist in providing follow-up procedures in regards to unanticipated results (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). According to Glaser (2001), saturation refers to:

‘conceptual density’ and ‘theoretical completeness’ (p. 191).

In other words, saturation is about absence of new happenings in the data. Grounded theory derives its theoretical foundations from Pragmatism (Dewey, 1958) and Symbolic Interactionism (Park and Burgess, 1921). Corbin and Strauss (1990) refer to two important principles drawn from these theoretical approaches:

‘The first refers to change; thus, phenomena are conceived as continually changing in response to evolving conditions. In the second principle, people are

seen as having control of their destinies through their responses to conditions, and are able to make choices according to their perceptions' (p. 5).

Thus, symbolic interactionists stress that people construct their realities from the symbols around them, through interaction; therefore individuals are active participants in creating meaning within a situation (Creswell, 2003).

5.1.3 Socio-cultural perspective.

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is based on the socio-cultural perspective derived from Vygotsky's theories (1978), and ideas about the relationship between the learner and culture (Spindler, 1955). The socio-cultural perspective conceptualizes learning as mediated by cultural and social processes and is theorised as a shared way of life within social communities. Vygotsky argues that a child's development cannot be understood through a study of the individual. We must examine the external social world and the context in which that individual life has developed (Wertsch, Hagstrom and Kikas, 1995). According to Vygotsky's (1978) perspective, an individual's action can be understood only by investigating it within its context, especially in its cultural, historical and institutional context. Therefore, as the study aims to explore the social context of the classroom, I need to study the learner and the teacher as part of a social context because social interaction, teaching and learning are all influenced by the social and historical context.

Moreover, this approach will allow me to explore the relationship between the individual and the environment within dynamic and ever-changing socio-cultural

contexts. Thus, the environment is seen to encompass both the physical environment and its historical and social context.

5.1.4 Macro-micro.

The focus of the research question requires the exploration of Korean primary classrooms in the national educational setting. Moreover, it considers the behaviour of students and teachers, and also the effects of the tradition and culture within which the classrooms are located. According to Shilling (1992), educational analyses remain divided largely into macro-level work (the study of large-scale phenomena such as social systems and national policies) and micro-level work (the study of small-scale phenomena such as case-studies of individual schools or specific instances of teacher-student interaction). Thus, an education system may be portrayed in terms of different organisational levels:

- Macro-level: the system of a country or state that is responsible for the overall organisation, the school and policy;
- Micro-level: the classroom environment consisting of teachers and students.

However, some large scale educational studies have focused on characteristics such as teaching and learning, classroom effectiveness, educational development, successful/unsuccessful reform measures, policy and quality of education and external constraints, without taking account of national, traditional and cultural considerations (such as cultural belief and values). In contrast, small scale research has addressed individual interactions, while failing to recognise and contextualise the social and cultural structures.

Accordingly, this study explores the primary classroom in relation to the wider community of school and beyond in which cultural practices and social norms are manifest. The action or activities in the classroom are in part determined, because they are part of this socio-cultural setting, at the macro level. Nevertheless, analysis of the relationship between the socio-cultural context and the events which occur at the micro-context is less straightforward. However, this does not mean that we should not explore aspects of the wider social and cultural system that are connected to, and which influence the micro context. Thus, the first two research questions focus on the characteristics of the common pedagogy in the national educational setting, while the third research question considers the traditional and cultural factors within which the classrooms are located.

5.2 Methodology for Focus group.

5.2.1 Introduction.

The pragmatic mixed methods methodology and grounded theory approach were discussed in section 5.1 and 5.1.2 respectively. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the rationale for the first phase of this methodology, which was exploratory and used the qualitative method of focus group interviews to help identify and explore the contribution of cultural, historical and social aspects of Korean pedagogy. The construction of the focus group interviews for pupils and for teachers is described in chapter 9.

5.2.2 Rationale.

The contribution of earlier studies to the body of literature is acknowledged, but classroom studies based in China, Japan and Hong Kong cannot be generalised to the Korean classrooms, as argued in the literature (Chapter 3). The literature showed that each of the countries in the Asian continent have different historical backgrounds, cultural values and even different languages; consequently, the pedagogy identified in those studies cannot characterise the Korean classroom, merely because they are “Asian”. Since the social context of the Korean classroom is unfamiliar and new, to facilitate the emergence of research categories during the initial stage of research, focus group interviews may offer the best research tool to begin the study. The focus group interview can identify characteristics and distinctive features of Korean pedagogy through open discussion among a limited number of people.

According to Morgan (1997), a focus group interview is a qualitative research method which has been mostly applied in business studies. However, more and more research has shown that focus group interviews are one of the most common methods for collecting qualitative data in the academic field. According to Krueger (1994), the aim of focus groups is:

‘not to infer but to understand, not to generalize but to determine the range, not to make statements about the population but to provide insights into how people perceived a situation’ (p. 87).

Using focus group interviews would be useful in the first stage of this study as diverse views about the Korean education system can be drawn out; beliefs on teaching and learning can be generated. Moreover, focus groups can be useful for reflecting the

social realities of a cultural group, through direct access to the language and concepts which structure participants' experiences while allowing them to present their views and opinions on Korean education in general. A focus group interview is not intended to solve problems but, rather, to explore diverse views and opinions, drawing out both positive and negative issues. Focus groups are an economical, fast and efficient method for obtaining data from multiple participants (Krueger and Casey, 2000). There is the potential to increase the overall number of participants in the study so that the interactions that occur among the participants can yield significant data (Morgan, 1998).

5.2.3 Purposive Sampling.

Choosing a study sample is an important step in any research project, since it is rarely practical, efficient or ethical to study whole populations. It is also not viable to assume that findings for the sample will be replicated to the rest of the population; therefore the sample needs to be carefully selected. According to Morgan (1998), when selecting a sampling strategy for focus groups, it is important that it fits the purpose of the study. The size and specific cases depend on the study's purpose, the resources available, the questions being asked and the constraints being faced.

A purposive sampling, also known as a judgmental sample, seemed most suitable for focus group interviews because the samples are selected based on knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling strategies are designed to enhance an understanding of selected individuals' or groups' experiences, or for developing theories and concepts. The study background is Korean education and the context is Korean pedagogy and its socio-cultural influences. Therefore, the best suited

participants for this study would be teachers and students because of their knowledge and experience of teaching and learning in Korean classrooms.

Further, the size of a focus group is closely related to recruitment conditions and research purposes; therefore, the size of the sample is quite important (Morgan, 1998). So far, there is no conclusion as to how many participants should be involved in a focus group. Morgan (1998) considered that the number should be between six and ten, but according to Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1990), eight to twelve would be better. Fern (1982) further pointed out that the number of people in a focus group can range from five to twelve. However, Morgan (1998) also pointed out that if the group size is too big, it may be hard to moderate the focus interview, and the responsibility for each participant to provide opinions will also be reduced. Taking Krueger's (1994) and Morgan's (1998) suggestions, six to ten participants should be large enough to generate discussion, yet small enough to maintain adequate control of focus groups for teachers and students.

There is also a need to consider the number of interview groups. These are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer brings additional insights to the research questions, refer to Section 5.1.2 for more detail). Therefore, the number of interviews should be determined while the focus groups progress and according to Silverman (2010), purposive sampling is most successful when data review and analysis are carried out in conjunction with other data collection.

5.2.4 Issues concerning data collecting and analysis.

An important issue which should be discussed in characteristics of focus groups is the group dynamics. Usually, it involves a relatively homogenous group of people with specific attributes and underlying issues of norms, beliefs and values, to provide related information around topics specified by researchers in a comfortable environment. However, some researchers prefer the use of heterogeneous group as the differences between participants can make a considerable impact on their contributions and the homogeneous group may not reveal diverse opinions and experiences. Robson (2002) however states that homogeneous groups provide better forums in which participants feel freer to facilitate communication, promote exchange of ideas and experiences, and give a sense of safety in expressing conflicts or concern. A homogenous group of teachers and students with similar background may facilitate open discussion and help recall common experience and insight from the interaction of ideas among the group participants. The group dynamic and the sense of belonging to a group can increase the participants' sense of connection and help them to feel safe to share personal information (Krueger and Casey, 2000). The interactions that occur among the participants allow rich contrasting views to appear and form (Morgan, 1998), while requiring relatively little structure on the interviewer's part.

However, according to Krueger and Casey (2000), the group dynamics could also be a disadvantage as the methods of asking questions is not standardised and might differ according to the individual situation. In different groups, it is possible that discussions might go in different directions and it is also possible that in one group, somebody might mention a new idea which is discussed in this group but may not come up in another,

even though it may be relevant in each group. Also, the group dynamics and group composition can influence what the participants say during the discussions. It is possible that the same person may speak differently in a different group on the same topic of discussion because he / she may be convinced by the argument of the group, and may change their opinion. Further, certain members might feel threatened or uncomfortable due to the variable impact of dominant and shy participants and this may hinder discussion or expression of one's views. This means that different group composition may result in different results. Nevertheless, according to Robson (2002), some of these problems can be overcome through careful planning. This includes comments such as asking other group members whether they agree or disagree with the dominant member, or asking the group if there are other things that may want to comment on or ask questions about (Robson, 2002).

Another concern in use of focus groups, (illustrated in the literature Section 4.2.3,) is Korean society's hierarchical nature. This may cause some participants to dominate the other merely because of rank or age. Therefore, it may be useful to conduct separate teachers' and students' groups and not to include the vice principal/principal in the teachers' group or to have teachers present in the student groups since rank may dominate discussions. Moreover, Robson (2002) recommended tape recording the sessions as it can eliminate biases and it is also good practice to have written notes made even if the session is taped.

Further, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) argued that writing the literature review too early in a grounded theory study might unduly influence the data collection and

analysis and might be a waste of time if the data led the researcher in a different direction. However, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) are more pragmatic with their admission that it might be impossible to delay the literature review completely. Ultimately, it is a balance between reading enough to be aware of, and remaining open-minded to, what the participants have to say. This approach may be best for this study as Strass and Corbin (1990, 1998) stressed that, although an exhaustive literature review might be inhibiting, some literature review is necessary.

Chapter 6: Methodology for questionnaire.

6.1 Introduction.

A questionnaire is the second stage of data collection for this study, using a quantitative approach. This chapter focuses on and explores the rationale for use of questionnaire with teachers and with students. The construction of the questionnaires is described in chapter 10. At this stage we need to note only that the data from the focus groups was used to inform construction of the questionnaires.

6.1.1 Rationale.

According to Munn et al (1990), questionnaires provide an effective way of collecting data in a structured and manageable form, to allow the data to be easily and quickly analysed once the survey is completed. Cohen et al (2007) suggested:

‘Surveys can be exploratory, in which no assumptions or models are postulated, and also in which relationships and patterns are explored’ (p. 207).

It also allows anonymity which encourages frankness in responses on sensitive issues. Cohen claimed that:

‘questionnaires gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events’ (p. 205).

More importantly, questionnaires can provide evidence of patterns amongst large populations and can generalize or make claims about the population in quantitative form

which can be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. This usually means survey research where a sample of population is studied, questioned or observed to determine its characteristics; it is then inferred that the population has the same characteristics. It is therefore important to note that quantitative research techniques are important in that they allow for generalisations from samples of populations. It helps to develop a testable hypothesis and theory which can be generalised across settings. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) claimed that:

‘quantitative research focuses on deduction, predictions, standardised data collection and statistical analysis’ (p. 18).

The focus group samples addressed in Chapter 5 were small and, therefore, findings cannot be generalised to the wider population. For this study, provided the sample is large enough, data from a survey is more likely to apply to the wider population.

6.1.2 Cluster sampling.

The aim of all quantitative sampling approaches is to draw a representative sample from the population, so that the results of studying the sample can then be generalized back to the wider population. The selection of an appropriate method depends upon the aim of the study. As far as possible, the sample needs to be representative of the wider population. Referring back to the research questions above, they required me to examine teachers’ and students’ knowledge and beliefs about Korean pedagogy. Thus, an appropriate approach to collect information from teachers and students is in their schools.

According to Kerlinger (1986) the most used method in educational research is cluster sampling. Groups of elements (clusters) instead of individuals from the population are used for the sample. The aim of the questionnaire is to collect large samples and cluster sampling is often more convenient when the population is very large due to time, expense, and convenience. Also cluster sampling, seems most appropriate as it is more manageable to approach the teachers and students in their schools as it is often not possible to randomly select from the entire population.

6.1.3 Issues concerning data collection and analysis.

Cohen et al (2007) identified different ways to collect quantitative data:

- Structured or semi-structured interviews;
- Self-completion or postal questionnaires;
- Telephone interviews, internet surveys;
- Standardized tests of attainment or performance and attitude scales' (p. 209).

Robson (2002) claimed that training and supervising a panel of interviewers can often be expensive and time consuming. Accordingly, a structured, self-completed questionnaire is a relatively simple and straightforward approach, and as I was confident of achieving a high response rate, it would be suitable for this study.

Further, Cohen et al (2005, 2007) stated that highly structured and closed questions are useful in that they can generate frequencies of response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis. Questionnaires can also include demographic questions about the

participants. These can be used in analysis to compare sub-groups, for example male and female, and may also provide a framework to aid the final stage of the research, which will consist of classroom observation and follow up interviews. Furthermore, each school may be treated as a unit of analysis and enable comparisons and variations to be made across and in between groups in the sample.

Chapter 7: Methodology for observations and follow-up interviews.

7.1 Introduction.

The first stage of the data collection involves focus group interviews which identify the distinctive features of Korean pedagogy and the effects of historical and socio-cultural influences on pedagogy, addressed in Chapter 5. The questionnaire, based on the focus group findings, collects data from a wider population, discussed in Chapter 6. This chapter examines the rationale for the methodology for observations and follow up interviews that constitute the third and final stage of data collection for the study. As in previous chapters, the construction of the observation schedules and the follow-up interviews is described in the relevant chapter (Chapter 11).

7.1.2 Rationale.

Observation helps increase our understanding of a phenomenon in a way and to a degree that is not entirely possible using only insights and information obtained through interviews and questionnaires as everyday action is often taken for granted. Cohen et al (2005) argue:

‘observational data are attractive as they afford the researcher the opportunity to gather live data from live situations’ (p. 305).

Observation gives the opportunity to look directly at what is taking place, rather than at second hand data (Patton, 1990). For this research, observation enables the researcher

to gather data on the physical setting, the human setting, the interactional setting and the organisational setting.

Data from direct observation can contrast with, and often usefully complement, information obtained by virtually any other technique. It is also possible to collect data on the number of incidents of a certain kind, for examples of specific behaviours of teachers and / or students, both verbal and non-verbal. The advantage of an observation technique is that it records actual behaviour, not what teachers' say they said or did, and believe they will say or do. Interview and questionnaire responses are notorious for discrepancies between what people say that they have done, or will do and what they actually did or will do. It was Montaigne who observed 400 years ago that:

'saying is one thing, doing is another' (cited in Cohen et al, 2005; p. 310).

In reality, our actions are often different from what we believe them to be at that time. Sometimes we have ideas about how particular types of people are likely to behave in particular circumstances. Galton (1987) argued that teachers perceive classroom activity in accordance with their aims rather than their practice. What the teachers and students discussed in the focus group interviews and indicated in the questionnaire study may not provide consistent information about what actually happens in the classroom. Since culture primarily relates to the way people interact with each other, to clarify the reasons why they behave in certain ways may be difficult because the effects of culture are not always conscious. We experience and learn to see and do things at an unconscious level and our experiences, our values and our cultural background lead us to see and do things in a certain way. Furthermore, much of what we do, individually and collectively,

is shaped by our personal history, culture and society. Therefore descriptions of what takes place in a classroom are often at variance with those observed by an outsider. Thus, everyday action is taken for granted, and we have ideas about how particular types of people are likely to behave in particular circumstances. Furthermore, these inherent difficulties in such data arise from deficiencies in memory and the wish to present oneself in a favourable light.

Observation data can be collected on facts and events, for example the amount of collaborative work taking place between the teacher and students. In addition, much can be learned by merely observing the physical environment, the specific arrangement and use of space, layout of furniture and the interactions of students and teachers in these environments.

Collecting data through observation at the end of the study aimed to validate, corroborate or clarify any contradictory results in the data collected from the questionnaires and focus group interviews. Observations are focused and can look selectively at the teachers' and students' behaviour in the classroom. Thus, observation in this study provides a complementary database which was examined within the context of data generated from the other methods of focus group discussion and the questionnaire.

7.1.3 Purposive sampling.

Again purposive sampling is suitable for selecting a sample of observations that will yield the most comprehensive understanding (discussed in Section 5.2.3). In observation research, purposive sampling can be undertaken on two levels:

- First, the context and setting, mentioned above, illustrate the place where students and teachers interact;
- Second, actual students' and teachers' interactions and behaviour in the classroom.

7.1.4 Methodology for follow up interviews.

Follow-up interviews allow the opportunity to probe and explore and/or clarify responses from initial observations. Interviews complement observation to clarify and help in understanding the interactions in the classroom. Interviews with participants should be conducted immediately after the observation, to verify and question the events or actions of the teacher or student observed in the lessons, while they were still fresh in the minds of the observer and participants.

The follow up interviews aim to clarify any possible questions that might arise from following the observation. The unfamiliarity with the individual classroom may result in misinterpretation of the situation when observing the interaction of the teacher, student and the environment in the classroom. Through interviews, these can be investigated and clarified. However, extra time and location are required by both parties for the interviews, including special equipment to record and transcribe interviews.

7.1.5 Issues with data collection and analysis.

There are two types of observation:

- Participant and
- Non-participant observation.

Participant observation is qualitative, often unstructured and focused on discovering meaning behind people's behaviours. The observer is also a full participant with the people under study in the activities inherent in the situation, either openly or covertly. Also, there is an argument, from an interpretivist standpoint, that understanding the social world can only be achieved by somehow gaining access to:

'subjective meanings and experiences constructed by participants in social situations' (Robson, 2002; p. 314).

However, there is a question of bias and subjectivity in participant observation which might undermine the reliability and validity of any evidence gathered. Different observers notice different things as the researcher brings personal assumptions and bias to the study that influence how they see and interpret the data. Therefore, they may fail to understand the real situation. Hence, participant observation was judged as unsuitable for this study.

On the other hand, non-participant observation can be structured, quantitative and more concerned with the frequency of action and with quantifying behaviour (Robson 2002). Non-participant observation is more systematic and structured with predetermined strategies for recoding what is observed and can also generate numerical data and thus, can claim objectivity (Cohen et al, 2007). Numerical data, in turn, facilitate the making of comparisons between settings and situations, and frequencies, patterns and trends to be noted or calculated.

Non-participant observation seemed more suitable as the third stage of data collection and aimed to corroborate previous findings from the earlier stages. The observer can adopt a passive non-intrusive role in order not to influence the observed

situation. The structured observation may take time to prepare but the data analysis is fairly rapid, as the categories have already been established from previous findings.

Whilst data from focus groups and questionnaires offer a theoretical input into historical and cultural influences on teachers' and students' behaviour, observation aims to capture a more complete picture about their roles in practice. Plausibly, data obtained by observation would ascertain whether what teachers and students say they do is what they actually do in reality. However, in this study both "accounts" are valid in their own right and just represent different perspectives on the data. Accordingly, observations could serve as a complementary database for the above methods.

Further, the world consists of collections of individuals affecting each other when interacting with one another and with the environment. The physical environment of the schools and classrooms may provide a picture of the social world and also supplement previous data collected. Photographs, notes about the setting and makeup of the schools and physical layout can provide cross references.

Chapter 8: Reliability and validity.

8.1 Introduction.

This study uses multiple methods, such as focus group discussions, survey, observation and follow-up interviews. Silverman (2006) suggests that whatever the researcher's theoretical stance, the issue of validity and reliability is central. In interpretive research, this combination of:

'a variety of theories, methods, observations, and empirical materials to produce a more accurate, comprehensive and objective representation of the object of study' has often been considered to be the most effective way of ensuring validity (p. 201).

The mixed methods design brings together the differing strengths and weaknesses of quantitative methods with those of qualitative methods. It is therefore possible to see whether data from different sources are consistent with one another, and exclusive reliance on one method, therefore, may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated.

Moreover, Onwuegbuzie et al (2006) suggests that universal agreement has been reached on the criteria for assessing mixed method research and that quality concepts developed for quantitative research such as generalizability, validity, and reliability ought not to be applied to qualitative research. Instead, drawing upon Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1990), traditional quantitative validity concepts have been reconceptualised and used as labels that are more acceptable to qualitative researchers. Broadly equivalent concepts can be found that apply to qualitative research. For example:

- Credibility/trustworthiness: internal validity;
- Transferability: external validity/generalizability;
- Dependability: reliability;
- Conformability: objectivity.

However, Brannen (2005) questions whether doing mixed methods research should separate these criteria or develop new specific ones just for mixed method research. Brannen also claimed that the criteria may depend upon the dominance of the qualitative or quantitative methods and type of data analysed within the research study and:

‘involves considerations at each phase of research enquiry’ (p. 176).

In this study, criteria for both quantitative and qualitative research are considered as they are equally significant. The next section examines the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of qualitative focus group methods. Further, it examines the reliability and validity of the quantitative part of questionnaire and the observation methods used in the study. Ethical considerations are then discussed for all methods.

8.2 Qualitative methods (focus groups).

8.2.1 Credibility.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that for qualitative work, creditability consists of ensuring that the data speaks for itself. Assessing credibility involves asking whether the participants’ views, in the context in which they were collected, are represented as accurately as possible by the researcher. Therefore, in order to ensure credibility, rich

‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973) are provided concerning the setting, procedure and interactions. Then, with the permission of the interviewees, all interviews are taped and later transcribed. A tape recording documents the interviews, enabling transcripts to be made of the narrative account to strengthen the credibility of the study. This is considered to increase the credibility of the qualitative research findings, as it provides a valid description of what is said during the interview (Robson, 2002). Further, to increase credibility of the qualitative interpretations, quotes of participants can be used to support the findings. Discussed in more detail in section 8.3.1, the inter-rater reliability of the study is increased when the transcribed interviews are transcribed and translated by two people to cross check content consistency.

According to Patton (1990), the credibility of the research is especially important in qualitative research as it is the researcher who has responsibility for data collection and analysis. Therefore, my own background information is provided in the thesis to increase credibility of the study (in Section 1.3).

8.2.2 Transferability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) associate transferability with generalizability, or external validity, of the research results to other settings, populations and circumstances. A limitation of focus groups is generalisation. Statistical generalisation is inappropriate for the small sample as it contains risk of error. Nevertheless, Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that the thick description and detailed data generated from a qualitative research can provide other investigators with what they refer to as a data base for deciding on the potential transferability of the results to other settings. Therefore, rich, ‘thick description’

and analysis are provided to make transferability clear (Geertz, 1973). Furthermore, although findings from the focus groups cannot be used in generalisations, the questionnaire can obtain statistically useful information based on findings from focus group data.

8.2.3 Dependability.

To be more specific about reliability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985; p. 300) use “dependability”, which closely corresponds to the notion of “reliability” in quantitative research. To address the issue of reliability, it would be necessary to show that if the study were repeated in the same context with the same methods and participants, similar results would be obtained. However, meeting the dependability criterion is difficult in a qualitative study.

To increase dependability in this study, it would have been desirable to have another evaluator identify the themes and categories arising from the focus group discussions to cross check the findings. However, the cost would have been prohibitive. In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the study provides detailed documentation of data collection methods and the decisions taken about the research which can be laid open to external scrutiny and thereby enable a future researcher to repeat the study, if not necessarily to gain the same results.

8.2.4 Confirmability.

The concept of confirmability is the qualitative concept comparable to objectivity in quantitative data. For confirmability, I offer a self-critically reflexive analysis of the methodology used in the research. Also, adoption of the constant comparative methods increases confirmability. This involves examination and re-examination of the data to discover the inherent themes emerging from it, and use of information from all available sources so that the themes are refined until saturation is achieved. Saturation is defined by Corbin and Strauss (1990) as occurring when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation. The number of interviews that lead to saturation was dependent on the interviews themselves and for this study, four focus groups of teachers and four focus group of students lead to saturation of data.

Moreover, to help ensure that the findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants rather than the characteristics and preference of the researcher, Miles and Huberman (1984) considered the key criterion for confirmability to be reflexivity. Reflexivity is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predisposition and is aware of the effects of their:

‘methods, values, biases, decisions and mere presence in the very situations they investigate’ (Bryman, 2004; p. 543).

Glaser and Strauss (1976) claim that researchers bring their own prior knowledge to analysis of data, and therefore emerging themes cannot be entirely theory free. Cohen et al (2007) mention that the:

'researcher's own emotions, attitudes, beliefs, values, characteristics enter the research' (p. 171),

thereby influencing the research during data collection and analysis. Cohen suggested that:

'reflexivity recognises that researchers are inescapably part of the social world that they are researching' (p. 171),

and that researchers should declare the extent of all their prior knowledge before research commences and/or should:

'disclose their own selves in the research seeking to understand their part in, or influence on the research' (p. 171).

Therefore, explanation and justification of all the decisions made in the research are identified to help minimise personal influence.

8.3 Quantitative methods (questionnaire and observation).

8.3.1 Reliability.

Reliability refers to the extent to which studies can be replicated. According to Robson (2002), the term reliability refers to the consistency of the results obtained from a research study. That is, within a certain limit of experimental or random error, if the same methods are used with the same sample, then the results should be the same (Cohen, et al, 2007). Robson also indicated that a high reliability of response is obtainable by providing all respondents with exactly the same set of questions. For the questionnaire study, precise phrasing of questions was used based on data from the focus groups and these

were written as simply as possible to avoid making unwarranted assumptions about the respondents. Thus, all respondents were provided with the same set of questions, which were distributed to each of the schools around the same time.

As for observations, it would be ideal to have another evaluator present in the classroom to increase inter-rater reliability; however, this was impractical due to limitation of classroom size and to reduce the effect of observer reactivity. A video recording can provide many of the benefits of a second observer. The video can also be used to conduct a follow-up rating on a portion of randomly selected observation to check the consistency of the observer and to increase inter-rater reliability.

8.3.2 Validity.

Robson (2002) suggests that validity refers to the extent to which a research study actually investigates what the researcher claims to investigate and is inherently difficult to establish within a single statistical measure. If a questionnaire is perfectly valid, it must measure in such a way that inferences drawn from the questionnaire are entirely accurate. However, Cohen et al (2005) argue that it is impossible for research to be 100 per cent valid and that a measure of standard error which is inbuilt has to be acknowledged. In quantitative data, validity might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatment of the data. The sampling technique I used in selecting the sample, and the time expended in developing the questionnaire, have been outlined in chapter 10. The following steps were taken to increase validity for the study.

8.3.3 External validity.

External validity emphasizes the generalization of the research findings. The external validity of this study is enhanced in the following ways. Firstly, purposive sampling allows me to select the cases that represent the features I was interested in (Silverman, 2010). For example, when arranging for questionnaires to be distributed to the schools, schools that differed in socio-economic catchment area are selected rather than selecting them randomly. This ensured that knowledge obtained is from a range of teachers and students from schools that differ in location and in the economic background of pupils' families.

This study also enhances external validity through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. More importantly, the combination of qualitative and quantitative data has the potential to achieve triangulation, which is one of the important ways to enhance external validity. By utilising mixed methods, the level of convergence among different sets of data generated by diverse methods can be checked. Bryman (1988) argues that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches can enhance the generalization of the researcher's findings if:

'they can be shown to provide mutual confirmation' (p.131).

This thesis examines the effect of historical, cultural and social factors on Korean pedagogy using both qualitative interpretation and description and quantitative statistical techniques.

Further, through a process of 'overlaying' data from multiple methods, we may obtain a 'true' understanding of the situation under study. Triangulation also involves the

use of a wide range of informants. Data from the focus groups with students provides viewpoints and experiences which are verified against data from the teachers, ultimately providing corroborating information. Further, the inclusion of both teacher and student experiences, not only reflects internal consistency but also the credibility of the voices that are heard. By doing so, it is possible to achieve an acceptable level of consistency in findings, and thus increase the external validity of the overall research.

8.3.4 Construct validity.

According to Yin (2003), construct validity refers to establishing correct operational measures for the concepts. Assessing validity in this sense aims to assess whether the researcher has found the most appropriate indicators. I recognize that the variables used in the quantitative models might not truly measure what is intended to be measure due to bias and subjectivity when interpreting data and making personal choices in developing the questionnaire and observation schedule. To reduce the threats to construct validity in the quantitative study, the words and categories from the focus groups are used to construct the quantitative questionnaire and further to establish the observation schedule.

8.3.5 Face validity.

According to Cohen et al (2007), face validity refers to researchers' subjective assessments of the presentation and relevance of the measuring instrument as to whether the items in the instrument appear to be relevant and reasonable. Face validity is increased through an informal pre-check (see Section 10.4.1). Comments related to the wording, clarity, ambiguity and other related issues in response to the items on the

questionnaire were made by three colleagues, and were taken into consideration. Further, using phraseology from the focus group data helped in choice of words when developing the questionnaire, thus increasing face validity.

I acknowledge that the questionnaires were not pre-tested again after the re-wording and clarification of the questions by a small sample of teachers and students. This would have been preferable, but was prevented by time constraints.

8.4 Ethical issues.

When people are being researched, observed and interviewed, whether they are aware of it or not, ethical issues arise that must be considered by the researcher (Cohen et al, 2007). In particular, advances in technology, cameras and microphones have made it possible to gather a significant amount of information about verbal and non-verbal behaviour of people which may be invasive or abusive, particularly if the subject is unaware of being observed. Since this study uses a range of methods for collecting data, a number of common ethical issues are considered at various stages of the research. Some of the issues include: guaranteeing anonymity/confidentiality, explaining the purpose of the research study, consent, the right to participate and to withdraw, and the use of a tape recorder and reporting the findings.

Detailed information was given to the participants, including the nature and methods of the research, its purpose and any risks run by the participants before informed consent was requested. Cohen et al (2007) claim that the:

'standard protection is often the guarantee of confidentiality, withholding participants' real name and other identifying characteristics' (p. 174).

The participants and schools were clearly informed that their names and identifying descriptions would be kept anonymous in published data to ensure confidentiality. In focus groups, there was more than one participant in the group and I needed to encourage the participants to keep confidential what they heard during the sessions. I had to be honest and keep participants informed about the expectations of the group (see Appendix 1 for moderator's guide). In relation to the self-completed questionnaires, Cohen et al (2005, 2007) stated that:

'the obligation to protect the anonymity of research participants and to keep research data confidential is all-inclusive. It should be fulfilled at all costs unless arrangements to the contrary are made with the participants in advance' (p. 61).

All the teachers and students who completed the questionnaires were guaranteed anonymity, (see Appendix 5). This is also the case for the students and teachers who participated in the classroom observation/interviews, (see Appendix 8).

8.5 Conclusion.

Chapters 5, 6 and, 7 have outlined the methodological decisions taken in this study, and have discussed the application of the chosen methods in each phase of the research. Chapter 8 has discussed the reliability, validity and ethical consideration for the study. Furthermore, the emphasis has been on explaining the reasons for the choice of methodology at each stage and identifying issues that will need to be addressed in data

collection and analysis. The details of construction of the instruments for each stage of data collection are given at the start of Chapters 9, 10 and 11 respectively, followed in each chapter by the results obtained from the focus groups, the questionnaires and the classroom observations and interviews respectively.

-Part 4- Results

Chapter 9 - Focus group interviews

Chapter 10 - Questionnaires

Chapter 11 - Observations and follow-up
interviews

Chapter 9. Results: 1. Focus group interviews.

9.0 Introduction.

Part four of the thesis presents the results in the sequence in which the research was undertaken. The field studies were conducted from June 2007 to September 2009. The data collection took place in three stages: focus group interviews, questionnaires, then observations and follow up interviews which are presented in Chapters 9, 10 and 11 respectively. The development of each research instrument, selection of samples, response rate and methods analysis are addressed before presentation of the findings in each chapter.

This study undertook to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a common pedagogy in a sample of national primary schools in Seoul?
2. If so, what are its distinctive features?
3. How does the current social and cultural context of Korea influence the common pedagogy in primary state schools in Seoul?

9.1 Focus group interviews.

The first stage of data collection involved focus group interviews. Focus group interviews were conducted and analysed from September 2007 - March 2008. Focus groups were essentially the exploratory stage and utilized a grounded theory approach in analysing the findings. Although, the main aim of the focus groups was an exploration process in its own right, they also aimed to help in design of the questionnaire, the second

stage of data collection. Data from the focus groups helped determine the questions and develop the questionnaire. Moreover, the larger number of teachers responding to the questionnaire produced results which were more likely to be representative of primary school teachers than the smaller numbers involved in the focus groups.

9.2 Construction of focus group interviews.

To answer the above research questions, I needed to first, identify common pedagogy in Korean classrooms. In order to identify primary school pedagogy in Korea, I needed to examine teachers' and students' descriptions of what primary education means and how they structure and organize themselves in the classroom. Specifically, I needed to examine their views on how pedagogy is developed and also to see how learning and teaching in Korean classrooms take place. With this in mind, the topics 'primary education' and 'classroom context' were chosen as the topical themes for discussion in both teachers' and student' focus groups because they were broad, general and sufficiently open ended to stimulate a group discussion. The same topic theme was used in both teachers' and students' focus group in order to obtain various perspectives on the same topic. According to Morgan (1997), general and open ended questions encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities. This means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a list of questions from the researcher's point of view, people were encouraged to talk to one another, ask questions, exchange anecdotes and comment on each other's experiences and points of view. However, the downside of group dynamics is that the articulation of group norms may

silence individual voices of dissent and even lead to straying from the topic under discussion. The unpredictability of group dynamics was discussed in more depth in section 5.2.4.

The main goal of the focus groups was to explore the multiple views of participants when they are brought together in the social group setting. First, it was necessary to allow new items to emerge from the discussion; however, my role as moderator helped the participants stay on task as necessary, and also helped the group members communicate and articulate their perspectives on the discussion topic. To help keep within the boundary of this research, a list of items was generated from the above topic theme as a reminder to help stay on task.

- 1) Primary education

- a. What is it;
- b. Influences;
- c. Control;
- d. Relationship.

- 2) The classroom context

- a. What/how is it taught;
- b. Development/learning.

Second, it was essential and beneficial to probe deeper into issues that were brought up or discussed during the focus groups. Prompts and phrases were used to help and encourage participants to talk, clarify views and help participants who failed to fully express themselves during the focus group. The same prompts were used in both

teachers' and students' focus groups. Although, I am older in age compared to the students who participated in the focus group, I am also a stranger therefore, I spoke honorific language when prompting both interviews. These prompts also reminded me that I should not make leading questions or make assumptions during these discussions. The prompts used in the focus group discussions are illustrated in Appendix 1.

9.3 Sample selection process.

Mr Park, an officer in the Seoul division of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Korea helped with the sample selection of the schools. Four regions in Seoul were chosen, taking into consideration stratification by socio-economic status of the school catchment area based on rent and housing prices at the time of the study. Within these regions, four schools were chosen that were more accessible due to Mr Park's acquaintance with the principal. See Table 9.1 for school demography.

Six teachers and six students were chosen to participate for each focus group interview within the four schools. It was easier and more convenient to visit each of the four schools separately to conduct the study, rather than bringing teachers and students from different schools together. While the samples were not random, it aimed to be broadly representative (see Section 5.2 for focus group methodology).

9.3.1 Student participants.

In each of the schools, the vice principle arranged the participants for the student interviews by asking for volunteers. There were two criteria for selection of participants;

one was time and availability, due to students' many afterschool programmes. The other was age; participants in the upper years, 10-12 years were selected. In Korea, the younger grades finish school earlier than the older grades and it was inconvenient to make the younger years wait until the older students finished school. Also, according to Richardson & Rabiee (2001), participants should be selected on the criteria that they have something to say on the topic, and would be comfortable talking to the interviewer and each other.

9.3.2 Teacher participants.

The vice principal also helped arrange the group of teachers within the school. The principal and the vice principal of the schools were excluded from the teachers' focus group discussions and the teachers were asked not to be present for the student focus group due to the effect of Confucian culture on relationships between adults and children. As suggested in literature 2.3.3, forming and maintaining correct human relationships is important in the Korean culture for keeping social order. Moreover, the Confucian belief in respect for others' views, especially those of people who are more senior in age and status, may hinder the participants from expressing their opinions, particularly negative or opposing views.

9.4 Characteristics of participants.

In Seoul, the majority of teachers and students have a relatively similar cultural and ethnic background. The growing number of immigrants coming to Korea, and the gradual transition to multiculturalism could be seen at the time of this study. However, according

to Kang (2008), Seoul was still considered to be relatively ‘ethnically homogeneous’.

Table 9.1 describes the demography of the schools and participant numbers in each focus group interview.

9.5 Procedure for data collection.

A series of eight focus group interviews took place in four primary schools in Seoul (Refer to Section 5.2 for focus group methodology). Focus group interviews took place directly after the last lesson of the day. The student interviews took place first followed by the teacher groups.

All interviews were held on the school premises. The seating was arranged for group members to face one another, with the recording equipment placed near the middle before participants arrived in the room. I performed the role of the moderator. To help the participants feel at ease, I started first by introducing myself because, Confucianism is strongly focused on human affiliation and forming relationships is important (refer to Section 2.3.3). Participants were free to ask any questions during this time. Once a comfortable atmosphere was established, rules and regulations of the focus group were explained following the guideline of my notes included in Appendix 1.

Discussions were initiated by inviting participants to share their thoughts based on a wide range of issues that was drawn up in order to stay on topic (see Section 9.2). I encouraged, probed and prompted the discussion when necessary, especially to keep the sessions on track. The topic list and example of probes are also included in Appendix 1.

Table 9.1 School demography and participant numbers				
Interview	Age of school	School size	School socio-economic status	No. of participant
1: School A	Built in 2005	1085 students	Mid	6 teachers
2: School A	Built in 2005	1085 students	Mid	6 students
3: School B	Built in 1962 and recently renovated	1523 students and 84 teachers.	Mid	4 teachers
4: School B	Built in 1962 and recently renovated	1523 students and 84 teachers.	Mid	5 students
5: School C	Built in 1981	1138 students and 77 teachers	High	6 teachers
6: School C	Built in 1981	1138 students and 77 teachers	High	6 students
7: School D	Built in 1977	920 students and 66 teachers	Low	5 teachers
8: School D	Built in 1977	920 students and 66 teachers	Low	6 students

9.6 Issues in data collection.

There was no major issue in the focus groups data collection. However, in the first teachers' group, a younger teacher was reluctant to share his/her views and would barely talk, while the older teachers expressed their views more openly. It was initially considered that the teacher was reluctant to discuss his or her views due to the influence

of the Confucian hierarchical order (discussed in the literature review in Section 2.3.3). Although it is not clear why the younger teacher in the first group was reluctant to participate, this idea was dismissed, as group dynamics in the remaining three interviews were open and discussions among the participants more enthusiastic irrespective of the teachers' age and experience. The lack of participation of the youngest teacher in the first group could be due to personality or even my lack of skill as this was my first attempt as moderator with an adult group.

As for the student focus groups, discussions went well once the initial suspicion of my motive was reduced by an assurance that none of what they said would affect them in any way in the school. The students were more than willing to share their thoughts and opinions. Once the participants' trust had been established, discussion followed easily.

9.7 Response rate.

I had arranged for six participants for each focus group interviews in each school. Table 9.1 illustrates details of participants for the focus groups. In the students' group, six students were selected in each school. All students participated in the interviews except one student who was absent during the day of the interview. In the teachers' group, six teachers were selected in each group but not all teachers participated. There were two groups that consisted of six teachers, one group with five teachers and one group with four teachers. The teachers who did not participate in the interviews were either held up or in another meeting.

9.8 Methods for data analysis.

9.8.1 Transcription and translation.

On completion of each focus group discussion, I transcribed and translated the data. To ensure consistency and accuracy, another translator assisted in this process. She had experience of living abroad and was familiar with both the western and Korean education systems.

Two people helped to ensure consistency by cross checking with each other. Two translated pages were placed side by side. A sentence or a paragraph was selected on each page and crossed checked for consistency and to ensure that conceptual equivalence has been achieved. When both parties agreed, another section on the following page was checked and this continued to the end of the transcript. If there was disagreement, the Korean transcript would be referred to and discussed together. If the disagreement was not resolved, the tape recorded discussion was played back and discussed together. If there were many inconsistencies, the whole translated transcript would be checked from the beginning. However, there were not many paragraphs, with significant inconsistencies.

9.8.2 Data analysis.

According to Charmaz (1995), the constructivist revision of grounded theory:

‘generates data by investigating aspects of life that the research participant takes for granted’ (p. 36).

This allowed the data to speak for themselves rather than approaching the data within existing theoretical frameworks, (see Section 5.1.2). The goal is to go from the general to the specific, without losing sight of what makes the subject of a study unique.

The software program Nvivo provided tools that helped organise, group and find patterns in the focus group data, coding it visually and into categories (Richards, 1999). Raw data is meaningless until we classify it and put it in context to interpret and understand its meaning and significance. Categories were developed systematically from the focus group data. The steps undertaken during the analysis are outlined below:

1. Line by line coding, highlighting key phrases from the transcribed interviews;
2. the highlighted phrases are shortened to develop main ideas (free nodes);
3. main ideas are grouped together based on similarity or concepts;
4. within these concepts subcategories are developed;
5. linkage among the categories and subcategories are developed (tree nodes).

Data was integrated into the program. The coding process in grounded theory started with open coding. A text section that said something important about a theme was marked as a free node. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), a free node is a node that has no structure to it; it exists as a theme in the research but is not linked to any other themes. As this process continued, many free nodes that talked about the same theme were grouped together and formed a tree node, which is the higher level category or theme for different free nodes (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Here different nodes

were organised into hierarchical categories using participants' own words in the category names.

9.8.3 Acknowledgement of limitation.

There are certain advantages to using focus groups, such as to generate fresh ideas; however, there are also disadvantages to their use. Three limitations were identified in the use of focus groups as an instrument.

One major disadvantage in using focus groups as a research method is that the sample is small and may not be representative of the population in general. In other words the larger the sample, the more sure I can be that the participants' answers truly reflect the opinion of the population. However, the questionnaires were developed following the focus group interviews in order to generalise to a larger sample populations.

Second, it was recognised that there would be difficulties when translating from one language to another. Sometimes when something is translated into another language and translated back into the original language, some of the original meaning gets lost because some expressions in Korean have no direct equivalent in English. For example, as noted in section 4.2.5, when 'self' is introduced in Korean there is not an equivalent meaning in the western understanding of this word. Therefore, two people transcribed the interviews and then cross-checked for consistency (see Section 9.8.1).

Lastly, it is sometimes difficult to interpret results of focus groups as the moderator's report of the results is based on subjective evaluation of what was said during the focus

group. As the researcher, I asked the questions, interpreted the data and decided what to code. I recognised that different people might analyse the focus group data differently due their pre-existing beliefs and values. It is argued that the main tenets of grounded theory are that coding should emerge from the data. That is, any concept in the analysis should be supported from the data rather than from preconceived models, theories, or hypotheses. However, we all have beliefs and values which guide the way we think and behave. This may have influenced the choices I made in the study.

9.9 Focus group results.

The following illustrates the results of the focus group interviews. Four broad themes were identified from the teachers' focus groups:

- Education system,
- Teaching,
- Learning,
- Social and cultural.

The four trees including the sub-themes are illustrated in Figure 9.2. The nodes represent teachers' views and beliefs on the current Korean pedagogy. These nodes show that teachers' views on Korean pedagogy are based on the social constructs of traditional Korean culture and society. The teachers show themselves to be constrained by a rigid education system based on a traditional hierarchal system. The descriptions of each node

and sub-themes are provided under each respective subheading which also includes a brief discussion to highlight interesting findings.

9.10 Education system.

The education system node is concerned with the present education system. The teachers identified two sub-themes; centralised system and decentralised reform.

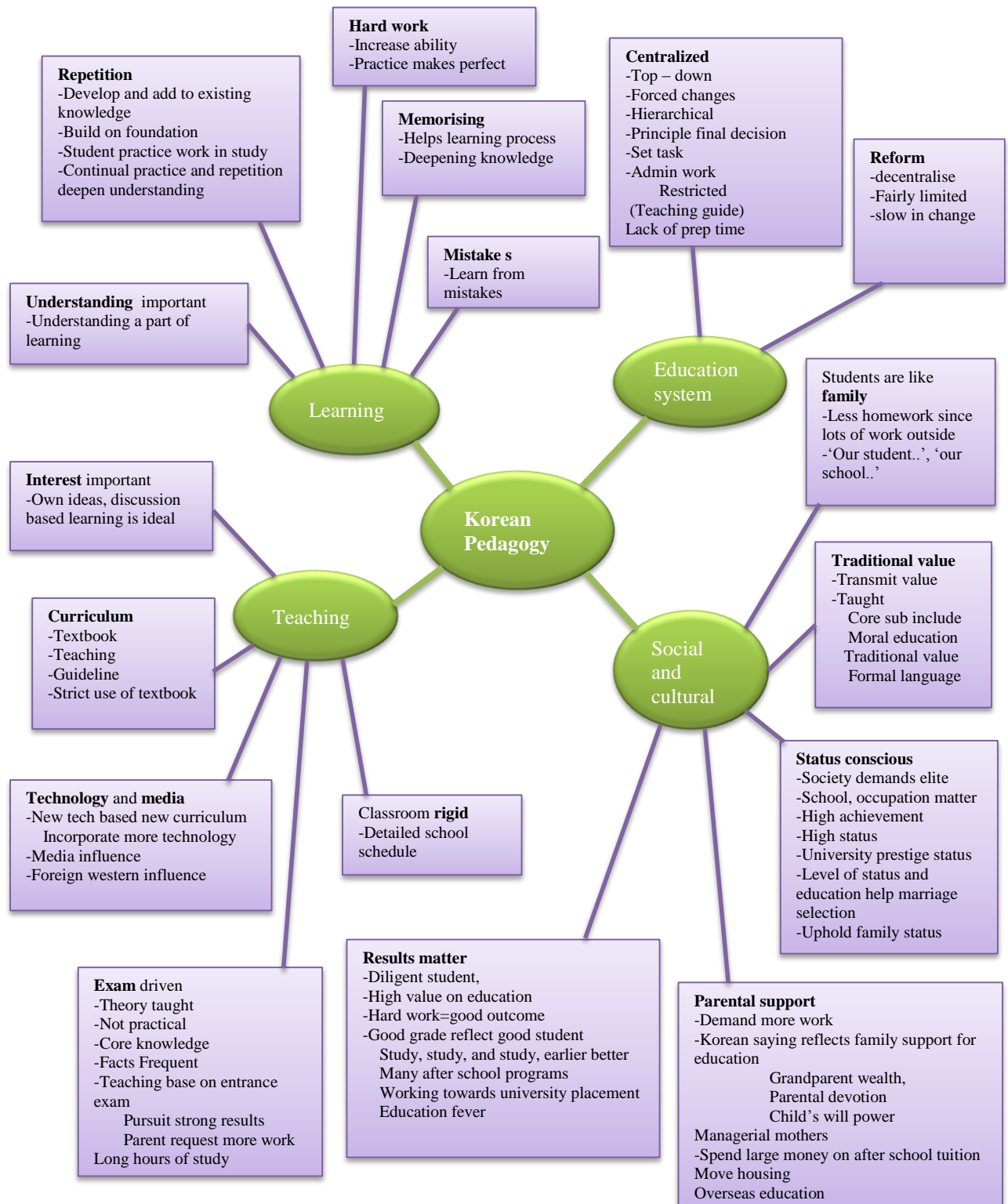
9.10.1 A centralised system.

The education system is said to resemble the ‘centralised’ government. The teachers from the focus group data indicated that the government still enforced the ‘top-down’ approach when implementing new reforms and changes in the education system. The centralised system ‘forced’ the teachers to follow strictly the national curriculum, teaching guidelines and assessments. This was discussed by teachers in all four focus group interviews. Teachers frequently commented that they were normally pressured to finish tasks during ‘set time’ which ‘limited’ the type of lesson taught. One teacher argued:

‘Centralised education focuses mainly on following the national curriculum and teaching guidelines and we are always pushed for time to finish the set task’.

The educational beliefs and practices reflect the hierarchical and fairly rigid social class organization of Korean society. It shows that in Korean society, harmony and tradition are indispensable elements and the education system is based on this formality and reinforcement of Confucian principles. One teacher suggested:

Figure 9.2 Diagram of free and tree nodes from focus groups with teachers.



‘The older and experienced teachers have the choice of choosing which class level they want to teach first, then the newer younger teachers choose. Usually the older teachers teach the lower grade like first and second grade as they are seen to be less demanding including shorter teaching hours in Korea.’ ‘... Although the principal makes the final decision of the placement, ideally teachers’ preferences are seriously taken into consideration...’.

Three out of four focus groups referred to the Korean education system and society as being ‘hierarchical’ and following the traditional Confucian values system. With the influence of authoritarian central government, centralised state exams have been the methods of choice, not only to establish orderly standards throughout the country but also because they provide a means by which the state can control the content of education. The frequent changes to the national curriculum, however, continually added more work to their present heavy workload. One teacher commented:

‘The frequent changes made by each change of government are inflicted on the teachers. We are burdened with more work to the existing heavy work load we have. It takes time for us to get used to the new policy.’

9.10.2 Reforms in the education system.

Two out of four groups of teachers in the focus groups argued that the process of change in recent reforms, decentralising the education system, was slow because of the top down centralised government system. The centralised government and hierarchal society ‘limited’ and ‘slowed change’. One group mentioned that school councils had been set up, but had little effect on the running of the schools as they were still dependent

on central government's financing and standard regulations for the local public school system. It seems that devolution of decision making to school level is difficult if core areas of education policy remain firmly under centralised control.

9.10.3 Discussion.

The education node shows that the Korean society is still very 'hierarchical' which is not surprising as it is known to reflect Confucian principles that claim to create and maintain harmony in relationships between people. Therefore, these values are reflected in the education system, and the affiliation between the people contributes to a rigid class system. It would be interesting to see if decentralisation has affected other teachers' views and their approaches to classroom management.

The findings imply that pedagogy in most classrooms is unlikely to vary due to the centralised nature of the education system. Nevertheless some variation is possible, depending on the individual teacher's adjustment to the changes introduced in the new reform, and whether teachers welcome them, accept them reluctantly, or resist them.

9.11 Teaching.

Five sub-themes were identified in the teaching node. These nodes are concerned with teachers' approach to the curriculum and control of the classroom, and also include how teachers organise and manage the classroom. The following describes each of the sub-theme identified in Figure 9.2.

9.11.1 Curriculum.

Textbooks are strictly used as a tool and guideline as set out in the national curriculum. The central government develops textbooks based on the national curriculum which are used in all schools in Seoul. All teachers in the four focus groups said that they based their instruction on the national curriculum. Clearly, this implies that instruction is strictly based on the curriculum guidelines. A teacher commented:

‘... I just use the textbook to teach because it follows the curriculum...I am so burdened with paper work that I miss the opportunity to prepare more...’.

9.11.2 Exam driven.

All teachers in the four focus groups perceived the teaching content as ‘exam driven’ consisting mainly of theory and not very practical. Teachers implied that the core knowledge is taught, especially in the primary school years. The education system in Korea is highly competitive; students strive for success because university places are reserved for the most elite class. In pursuit of strong results, teachers accept that teaching is based on entrance exams. A teacher argued:

‘The final university entrance examination is considered very important and students work towards this goal.’

Moreover, the assessment guidelines force teachers to teach based on tests and examinations. A teacher said:

‘The teaching is based on textbooks and frequent tests and we cannot leave out parts in the textbook that are not important because parents follow carefully. Some parents request more work for the children.’

9.11.3 Rigid classroom.

All the teachers in the focus groups suggested that the classroom environment is very ‘rigid’ and inflexible. This could be because the instructions are based strictly on the textbooks and the school curriculum. As mentioned previously in section 9.10.1, the centralised nature of the education system forces the teachers to follow instructional materials based on a curriculum which is developed by the central agency.

Nevertheless, three out of four groups of teachers mentioned that the new decentralised reform was supposed to give more freedom in choice of teaching materials and to introduce a more creative teaching environment. Teachers, however, were bound to the traditional methods including the use of textbooks and due to limited time for lesson preparation, were constrained from using other methods.

9.11.4 Technology and media.

Three out of four focus groups of teachers suggested that technology and media help them create a more interesting and enjoyable teaching environment. The new seventh curriculum enforces the use of technology and media in the teaching environment. The teachers are considered to be well equipped with their ICT skills and knowledge. A teacher commented:

‘The use of computers and new technology in the classroom helps create a more interesting and fun environment in classes’.

The nature of technology for teaching and learning has become social and collective. Teachers’ suggested that there is a national commitment to technology, and education is bolstered by one of the highest rates of high-speed internet penetration in the world with access to the internet in all schools in Korea.

9.11.5 Discussion.

The teaching node deals with teachers’ management of the classroom. The teachers implicitly argued that the textbooks developed by central agency were strictly followed and were used as a teaching tool. Further, the competitive nature of the education system and instruction based on exams and textbooks were seen as creating a rigid classroom environment. Nevertheless, teachers also implied that the new technology and media incorporated into the classroom teaching environment created more interesting lessons and sustained students’ interest. Although teachers attributed the rigidity of the environment to the textbook usage, there may be other reasons such as the way the teachers taught a lesson or even the tone of a teacher’s voice. It will be interesting to compare teachers’ questionnaire data with the findings from observation of teachers and their management of the class (chapter 11).

9.12 Learning.

Five sub-themes were identified in the learning node. The learning node is concerned with beliefs about learning approaches and the learning environment in Korean classrooms. The following sections describe each of these sub-themes shown in Figure 9.2.

9.12.1 Repetition.

All teachers in the focus groups discussed the value and efficacy of repetition as a means to consolidate learning, a component of Korean pedagogy. The repetitive drill and practice is a building block for more meaningful learning. Statement made by a teacher:

'practice makes perfect'.

By practising in a repetitive manner the learner develops the ability to execute a task. A teacher's comment:

'...to practice is to strengthen the skill of the student and this builds a foundation that can never be taken away...student is prepared and that enables them to rise to the challenges that life brings.'

Moreover, continual and repetitious practice was believed to deepen understanding by reinforcement of concepts. The achievement of mastery of a concept is practiced in a functional rather than in a strictly repetitive sense. A teacher suggested:

‘Going over and practising lessons help children understand...Students should work hard as results matter...go over the topic they are studying a few times...memorising will help their understanding’.

9.12.2 Memorising.

Three out of four focus groups discussed the learning process through ‘memorising’, which deepens knowledge and helps with learning. Teachers believed that learning ‘adds on to existing knowledge’. Students develop deeper understanding by ‘building a strong foundation’. This view sees learning as a systematic process involving predetermined stages as suggested by a teacher:

‘It is crucial that a child has basic foundation to each subject to increase in depth of understanding...Each year, students increase in their understanding and knowledge as they progress to next grade.... For example in 1st grade the child will learn addition and subtraction in tens, then in 2nd year the student adds to their existing knowledge by learning addition and subtraction in hundreds and the child increases depth of knowledge with each stage of learning.’

The learning process was viewed as gaining competence in basic concepts and then, through practice, students’ gradually gain understanding. Two teachers’ commented:

‘...to discuss about the topic and basic concept through continuous practice and feedback the child will gain understanding eventually.....one day it will click....’

‘The school lessons are fast paced. Children would have learned the topic I am teaching during afterschool programs... Parents think learning a subject before the child learns in school will help with deeper understanding when they learn again in schools’.

9.12.3 Making mistakes.

Two out of four focus groups implied that making mistakes is an important part of learning. Teachers believed failure is a part of learning as we ‘learn from our mistakes’. Implicitly, mistakes are due either to poor learning habits or to the child’s difficulty in understanding. The student should recognize the problem and relearn in a better way, to avoid similar mistakes. Mistakes were viewed as a stepping stone to a higher reality. By learning from mistakes, students appreciate that understanding is enriched through repetition and correction of errors. A teacher suggested:

‘...the things that the student knows come about from the process of making mistakes and learning’.

9.12.4 Understanding.

Two out of four focus groups also discussed learning as the process of understanding and comprehending. Moreover, teachers believed learning involved attainment of knowledge through understanding. Meaning is generated by the interaction between new information and students’ interpretation of their existing knowledge. Teachers believed a good learner is a good listener, embodies perseverance and always tries their best. The process of learning often starts by gaining competence in the procedure or basic concept; then, through practice, students connect the new concept with existing knowledge. Two teachers commented:

‘...to discuss the topic and basic concept through continuous practice and feedback; the child will gain understanding eventually.....one day it will click....’

‘The school lessons are fast paced. Children would have learned the topic I am teaching during afterschool programs... Parents think learning a subject before the child learns in school will help with deeper understanding when they learn again in schools’.

9.12.5 Interest.

Two out of four groups of teachers considered discussion based learning as the ideal pedagogy. Teachers’ believed that it creates and develops students’ own ideas and increases student ‘interest’ in the subject taught. Interest and goals were identified by teachers as important motivational constructs which influence students’ engagement and learning. Teachers implied that attention and interest are inter-related and they believed in the importance of connecting learning to students’ interests.

Although teachers used the textbooks as teaching tools, they implied that they incorporated other activities in their methods of teaching to integrate students’ interests and creative development. A teacher argued:

‘Textbooks are like a specific guide to the teachers since the tests and examinations are based on these textbooks, however, I try and incorporate other activity including with my lessons because it creates student interest and increases student motivation to learn’.

9.12.6 Hard work.

Hard work was considered to help increase ability. All teachers in the focus groups discussed how students can become successful through hard work and being diligent. A student with a ‘heavy bottom’ was a comment a teacher used to describe students who sit

at their desk and continually work at their studies. It is a belief that working hard can increase chance of learning and understanding. Teachers believed that the student will succeed if they work hard enough, and this does not solely have to do with ability. A teacher responded:

'To be a good student and get good grades, the children need to work very hard. If they are willing to work, their grades will improve'.

The teachers believed that a child could become a competent student by hard work and with strong determination. There is a saying in Korea that described the extent of hard work:

'If you sleep three hours, you succeed; if you sleep four hours you fail.' (Park, 2009 cited in Chandler, Washington Post, July 5).

9.12.7 Discussion.

The learning node demonstrated Korean learning characteristics and approaches. Teachers argued that repetitive practice is an aspect that promotes the acquisition of learning by deepening understanding and by re-reinforcing taught concepts. It is interesting how repetitive practice and hard work is considered to increase ability because it increases the students' chance of learning and understanding. Learning is the process of understanding and comprehending; the role of repetition and the act of memorising is a precondition for understanding. This view was consistent for all the teachers. It will be interesting to see if these views are still found in a larger sample of teachers in the questionnaire.

9.13 Social and cultural.

The social and cultural node was concerned with educational values and attitudes towards Korean pedagogy. The following section describes the five sub-themes from the social and cultural node, shown in Figure 9.2.

9.13.1 Traditional values.

All teachers in the focus groups perceived education as the process by which society transmits and guides behaviour. These behaviours are embedded within traditional cultural norms of Korean society.

Teachers suggested that the Korean education system reflects the cultural values of the society. In Korean primary schools, not only are the students taught basic core subjects such as maths, reading, writing, spelling, science, and so on, the students are taught ‘interpersonal skills’ and how to interact with one another. Teachers implied that the honorific language is taught and used throughout formal schooling and that it reflects how one talks and behaves. The traditional values of social status and respect are an inherent part of the language and are reinforced whenever language is used. A teacher suggested:

‘...education is a guide for students to the way of life....teaching basic things needed for living and existing in society...learning social norms...’.

9.13.2 Status conscious.

Korea is a very status conscious society and the success of the child reflects parents' successes. All teachers in the focus group discussed how family status is upheld when the child does well in school, especially when a child succeeds. The successful placement of a child in a prestigious university or job placement in a major company increases the status of the family. Teachers suggested that people's perception of school achievement reflects a child's potential ability to achieve a high standard in the work force. A teacher suggested:

'It is often said that graduation from Seoul National University in South Korea, is a high-status track to an individual's economic and social successes.'

Thus, the ultimate aim for a student was working to get placed in a prestigious university. Primary school children are working to gain placement in a selective high school, which will increase their chance of placement in a superior university and getting a respected job.

People with a college education, including skilled workers with vocational school backgrounds, are treated as second-class citizens by their white-collar, college educated managers despite the importance of their skills. Teachers stressed that this increased and intensified competition for places at prestigious universities, which were considered the sole gateway into the elite circles. There are also huge differences in base salary for a college graduate, compared to a high school graduate. Sometimes the difference is more than double. The wage gap between college graduate and high school graduate workers

has been increasing for some years and is bringing serious socio-economic repercussions, including increasing disparity. A teacher suggested:

‘White collar jobs pay considerably more than blue collar jobs and people with professional jobs are respected in Korea.’

Some teachers’ also mentioned that marriage partners are chosen to match a person’s status, For instance, social status, respectability, educational status and maybe job description are all taken into account. Some teachers claimed that people have better lives when marriages are entered into between couples who meet each other's ‘conditions’. This concept is similar to arranged marriages in some countries. A teacher commented:

‘Good job opportunity results in good marriage’.

9.13.3 Results matter.

All teachers in the four focus group discussions argued that ‘results mattered’ in the Korean classrooms. The characteristics of a promising student should be ‘diligent’ with ‘good grades’ and ‘hard working’. Further, it was believed that ‘hard work’ increases students’ ‘ability’ which results in ‘good outcomes’. A teacher suggested:

*‘A good student is someone who works hard, is obedient and has good grades’...
‘Listens well and studies hard’.*

Thus, end results are important in Korea, particularly obtaining high scores on tests. Teachers suggested that students’ test results determine the quality of college placement, and ultimately determine their future. Those who score well can enter one of Korea’s best

universities, which have traditionally guaranteed them a job for life as a high placed bureaucrat. This single set of tests is thought to identify intelligent and diligent students. It develops the belief that they can rise to the top by studying very hard. As a consequence, teachers' perception of a good student is one who obtains high test scores and maintains high grades. A teacher suggested:

'A good student is one who has high grades and able to obtain good scores. To attain these high scores you need to work hard'.

9.13.4 Students are like family.

Teachers' in two out of four focus groups spoke of students with affection, referring to 'our' or 'my' student. Some were sympathetic with the students and their work load from all the afterschool curricula. A teacher commented:

'I don't give out much homework because I don't want to burden "our" students with more work'.

9.13.5 Parental support.

Teachers in three out of four focus groups discussed parents' devotion to educating their children. Parents are highly devoted and have strong ambitions for educating their children. Teachers discussed strong parental involvement in educating their children. It is believed that parents' dedication and effort helps their child excel. Students are sent to expensive afterschool programmes to help them advance in their studies. A teacher suggested:

'Parents cannot accept children are different... they are to do the same as others...so the parents send their children to expensive after-school schools so they can improve to become a better student'.

Furthermore, parents were willing to move and relocate to another suburb with better schools or closer to good after school programmes. This showed the depth of parent devotion and willingness to provide a better learning environment. A teacher's comment suggested:

'Parents will relocate and move to an area where the 'school' is considered higher in quality or even move to another nation in order to provide a better education for their child... '.

Also a large percentage of parents in Korea send children overseas to an English speaking country at an age as young as elementary school level in hopes of a better education. Some go for just a short period of time, i.e. six months to one year but some go from elementary level until they are admitted to college. Frequently, the mother accompanies the child while the father remains behind to support the family financially. There is a name for the father who remains: 기러기아빠: *gireogiappa* means 'goose dad'. The term is inspired by the fact that geese are a species that migrate, just as the father flies over to see his family. Fathers who can afford frequent visits are called 'eagle dad' while fathers who are financially constricted are called 'penguin dad' because they cannot fly. A teacher commented:

'...parents spend large sums of money to send their child abroad for studies... '.

Those students who stay in Korea are sent to expensive private academic programmes also called '*hakwon*' or otherwise known as 'cram schools'. The mother

plans a tight schedule for their child to follow. These devoted mothers are called ‘manager-mothers’ who drive their child to numerous expensive after school programmes. A teacher argued:

‘The most important role that mother plays is being the one responsible for family education and teaching them the appropriate and expected behaviour’.

Two out of four focus groups discussed children as an extension to the parent; and parents go to great lengths to create an environment where their child can excel in their studies. A teacher quoted the saying:

‘...in order for a child to succeed a child needs grandparents’ wealth, parents’ knowledge and child’s will power’.

This shows the extent of the importance of education and parents’ desire for the success of their child, which extends to and includes the grandparents. The above comment means that the grandparent provides financial support, while parents’ social networks provide knowledge of the best after school programmes. Moreover, to cope with the various programmes the children need willpower and determination to work hard.

9.13.6 Discussion.

The social and cultural node was concerned with socio-cultural values and attitudes towards Korean pedagogy. This involved the rationale and thinking process that affect the ideas and behaviours which shape teachers’ pedagogy in Korea. In Korean schools, traditional values are transmitted through education in moral values especially when

formal honorific language is taught and used in class. It is interesting that the Korean language has such a strong effect on society when interwoven in the culture.

Teachers' concern for their students' wellbeing, with the amount of work and stress the student encounters, conflicted with teachers' belief that students should work hard as results mattered because students were identified on merit. But what is astonishing is that the success of a child are based on the child's academic achievements; the attainment of high grades, placement into a prestige university and professional occupation are the main goals for Korean students. Again, it will be interesting if these views are shared by a wider population of teachers who complete the questionnaire. The next section examines results from the students' focus group interviews.

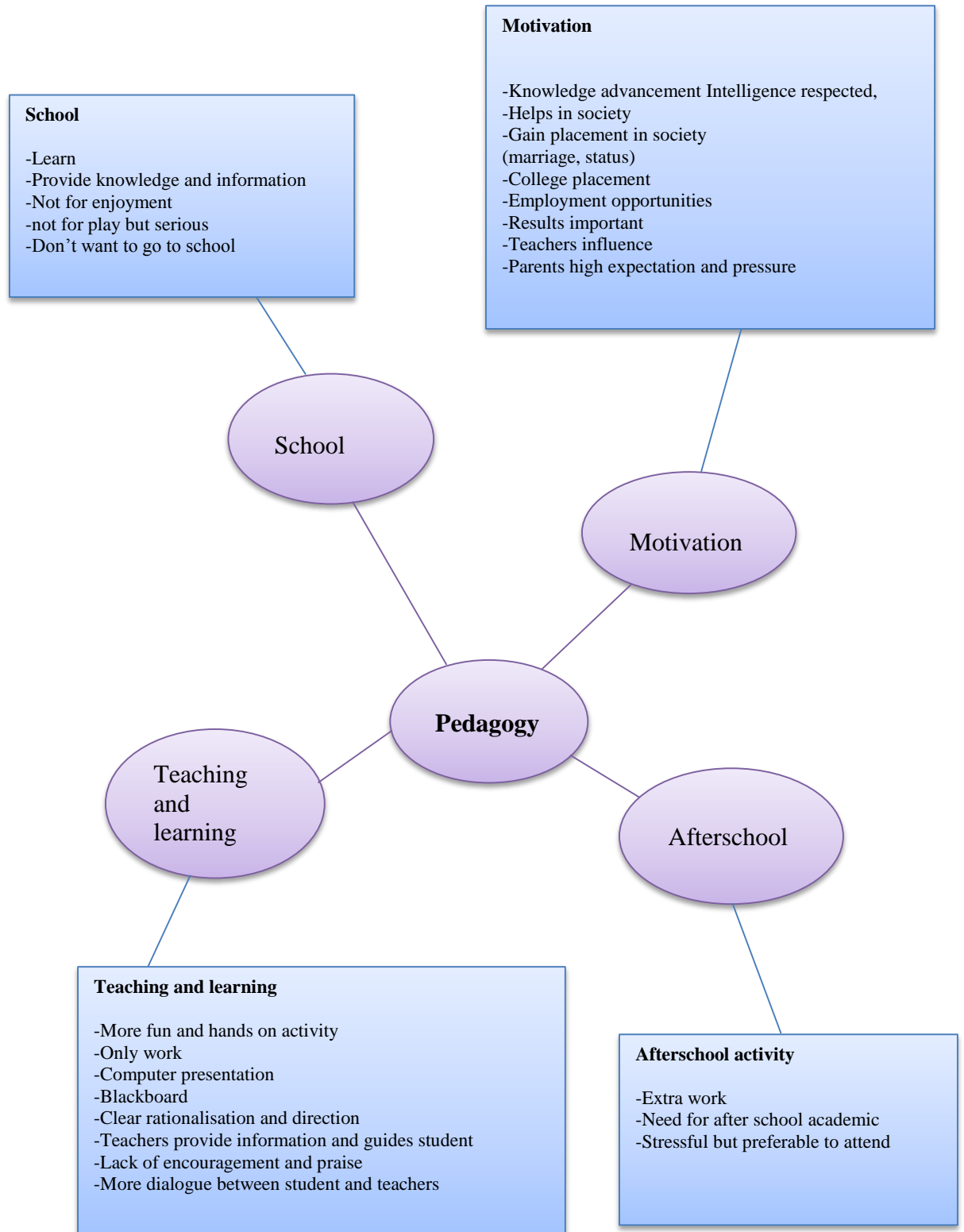
9.14 Focus group results: 2. Students.

This section explores the results of students' focus group interviews. Analysis of the student focus group transcripts identified four nodes:

- Meaning of school,
- Student motivation,
- Teaching and learning,
- Afterschool activity.

Figure 9.3 is a diagram that represents the tree nodes identified from the students' focus group interviews.

Figure 9.3 Results of the student focus group data.



The nodes represent students' views on the meaning of school. Students' attitudes can have a significant impact on their academic success. The node also categorises students' motivation and beliefs about teaching and learning. Further descriptions are shown under each sub-heading.

9.14.1 Meaning of school.

The school node was concerned with students' interpretation of what school means. Students' perceptions of school and education are important as they help to shape reactions to their learning experiences. In all four students' focus groups, the main perspectives on education and school were about 'learning'. Learning for the Korean student is important because it is seen as a form of personal growth. A student suggested:

'... learning helps us survive in society and the information helps us to function properly... '.

In addition, all student focus groups discussed the importance of education for 'knowledge advancement'. School is a place mostly to learn and gain intelligence. School provides access to information to help students function well in society. Students without education cannot be active in society. A student commented:

'Learning helps me get by in society....also it is information needed for our life... '.

School is seen by the students as a place to learn, where they 'work hard' to achieve their goals. All students in the focus groups discussed the need to work hard, to learn and develop skills. Working hard helped them do well at their studies. A student commented:

‘School is a place where we learn and need to work hard at our studies...’.

Also, three out of four groups of students described education as a ‘necessity’. Education for these students was felt to be very important as it created awareness and generated a way of thinking. A student suggested:

‘...we sort of feel the need to learn like second nature, like a necessity...’.

Two out of four focus groups implied that students ‘want’ and like to attend school not only to learn but to socialise. Korean students are very busy with extra-extracurricular activities (mostly in the form of private afterschool programmes). As a result, there is limited time to socialise with friends outside of school. A student suggested:

‘...school was a place to meet friends and socialise’.

Another student suggested:

‘We like school and want to attend. I like to meet my friends and socialise...’.

9.14.2 Motivation.

All students in the focus groups implied that diligent students have high grades. These students are not only respected, looked up to and admired by teachers but also by peers. A student said:

‘students with high grades are looked up to by friends and admired by the teacher... they are respected... we have to work hard in order to do well’.

Thus, knowledge and intelligence are respected in Korean society. They are placed high on the social ladder. A student said:

*‘A good student is someone who works hard, obedient and with good grades’
‘...a lot of studying is good’.*

It was understood by all students in the focus groups that working hard in school helped students enter a prestigious university and that the end results are to gain a good job, prosperity, respect and recognition from society. A student suggested:

‘I will be recognised in society only if I enter university. I hate to be ignored when graduating from a low level university therefore I have to study hard’.

Therefore, good grades, doing well in school, especially getting high scores in their final exams, results in placement in a prestigious university. All students were conscious of tests and their ‘results’ in school. The final results are considered very important to the Korean student. A student suggested:

‘I will be recognised in society only if I enter university...’.

All focus group students commented on gaining professional and respectable employment in a large well known company if they did well in school. A student commented:

‘School is the base for entering university...If I don’t enter a good university; it will be difficult to be employed in a large corporation...’.

Students felt the pressure of ‘high parental expectations’ and upholding family status. A student argued:

‘My parents expect me to try hard and do well in school. They want me to become a doctor when I grow up’.

Two out of four groups discussed teachers' influence on their studies and teachers' motivation in class. A student commented:

'My teacher is caring and helps me to learn. She is very knowledgeable and fair...'

9.14.3 Teaching and learning.

Students described a teacher as a person who led and guided them throughout schooling. Teachers were also knowledgeable and provided wisdom. A student commented:

'Teachers' provide us with information that is needed to live in society...'

All students in the focus groups preferred very straightforward teachers who provided clear, articulate and coherent explanation and instruction. Also all students preferred 'hands on activities' as the best method of learning. Two out of four focus groups liked and enjoyed the computer presentations in class instruction. Students suggested that they could relate to the presentation and it was easy to understand. Computer presented lessons were effective in teaching. One out of four focus groups disliked only blackboard work but welcomed it for maths, when the problems were clearly illustrated. A student commented:

'The lessons shown on computer are always fun...it is easy to understand the topic when shown on TV'.

Two out of four focus groups preferred discussion based lessons with clear precise explanations for each lessons. By discussion based lessons, students were referring to

interaction with a teacher with activities and worksheets, and not just lectures. The students did not like wasting time with meaningless work but preferred teachers who demonstrated clear, unambiguous lesson aims, and an accurate explanation of the lesson to help them with understanding. A student argued:

'...teachers that provide clear instructions and outline summary of topic contents are the best teachers...'

Respect was given to teachers who were fair. Efficiency and reasonableness in the classroom were also considered good qualities in teachers. A student commented:

'We like teachers that treat us fairly and are encouraging'.

All students in the focus groups agreed that teachers expect students to be well behaved, always work hard and to do well in their school work. Thus, results are considered important for both students and teachers. A few students claimed that teachers reprimand them for getting bad marks on tests. Further, students also suggested that teachers barely commented on or praised their good performance. A student suggested:

'....teachers want us to get high marks on our test and when we do badly they get disappointed and we are scolded at. Teachers never praise us.....'.

Students complained that their Korean teachers did not give praise and encouragement:

'Our teachers seldom praise us in class but we are often criticised'.

9.14.4 Afterschool activity.

Two out of four focus groups of students were stressed with the many after school programmes which increased homework load. A student suggested that:

'I am not good at studying by myself. I prefer going to academy and study with friends.'

Although there were negative views on extra after-school programmes, three out of four groups of students still preferred to attend. These programmes helped with students' work and, as suggested above, afterschool places are where students socialise with their friends.

*'I like attending afterschool programs because I can meet friends there.....
These programs help me in my studies.the afterschool programs are helpful
as sometimes it is hard for me to study on my own.'*

9.14.5 Discussion.

The focus groups explored pedagogy and its relation to a wide variety of student views of their Korean classrooms. The students' focus group interviews identified four nodes. These nodes were concerned with students' beliefs about teaching and approaches to learning. The students described school and learning as a necessity for knowledge advancement. Students are motivated to learn because intelligence and high grades are respected not only among peers but also recognised in society as good grades result in better college placement and employment opportunities. This view is interesting. While

there is a risk of generalising or stereotyping, in other cultures, students who are intelligent are often branded as being nerds and considered 'not cool'. It is very interesting that students are respected even among peers when they do well in school in the Korean culture.

Hands on activities and teacher/student dialogue are considered to provide more learning opportunities when instructions are precise and clear. Further, students preferred more praise and less criticism when learning. It is intriguing that these views were not mentioned at all in the teachers' focus groups and it would be interesting to see if teachers' views mirror the students' in the questionnaires.

Similar to the teachers' focus group interviews, there were no significant differences that stood out between the discussions from the schools in different socio-economic areas. This is not surprising because high achievement reflected high level of status and if status is important in Korean society then importance placed on learning and especially getting high results should not be affected by different catchment areas.

Chapter 10: Results: 2. Questionnaires.

10.0 Introduction.

This chapter describes the design and development of the questionnaires, sample selection procedure and the method of data analysis. This is then followed by the presentation of questionnaire findings. The study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a common pedagogy in a sample of national primary schools in Seoul?
2. If so, what are its distinctive features?
3. How does the current social and cultural context of Korea influence the common pedagogy in primary states schools in Seoul?

10.1 Questionnaire.

The second stage of data collection involved questionnaires. Questionnaire surveys were conducted in August 2008 - October 2008. Questionnaires were seen as an efficient method to collect data from many people in a short time and at a relatively low cost. Questionnaires provided evidence of patterns amongst larger populations based on the findings from the focus groups to produce generalizable results. The overall rationale and justification of the methodology was discussed in Chapter 5 and methodology for the questionnaires were discussed in Chapter 6.

10.1.1 Construction of questionnaires.

The phraseology that participants used to describe their experiences in the focus group discussions helped inform the choice of words when developing the questionnaire. Separate teachers' and students' questionnaires were developed and are discussed accordingly.

10.2 Construction of Questionnaire: 1. Teachers.

The first six questions were designed to collect teachers' background information which would help when comparing responses in sub-groups of the sample. Questions seven to ten were based on and developed from the focus group findings. The four nodes identified in the teachers' focus group interviews presented in Figure 9.2 were used as guides to develop these questions. A copy of the teacher questionnaire is shown in Appendix 3.

10.2.1 Construction of questionnaire: section seven.

The development of question seven of the teachers' questionnaire was based on the 'education system' nodes from focus group findings (Section 9.10) summarised below:

- **Centralized**
 - Top – down
 - Forced changes
 - Hierarchical
 - Principal makes final decision
 - Set tasks

- Admin work
 - Restricted due to teaching guide
 - Lack of preparation time
- **Reform**
 - Decentralization
 - Change is fairly limited
 - Slow pace of change

These nodes showed that teachers considered the education system to be centralised. However, teachers also claimed that the education system had undergone new reform measures but indicated that these changes were slow and fairly limited. The highlighted data in the above paragraph were used to develop question seven of the teachers' questionnaire presented below.

Questionnaire question 7: Which of the following are involved in planning and decision making procedures in schools and classrooms?

Teachers' planning and decision making	agree
Teachers make important decisions for the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
New ideas are encouraged in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers have authority to choose how lessons are taught	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers have authority to choose instruction material	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.2.2 Construction of questionnaire: section eight.

The development of question eight of the teachers' questionnaire was based on the 'teaching' node identified in the focus group data (Section 9.11) and is summarised below:

- Curriculum
 - Strict use of textbook
 - Teaching manual
- Classroom organization rigid
 - Detailed school schedule
- Exam driven
 - Instruction based on exams
 - Theory taught
 - Not practical
 - Core knowledge
 - Facts Frequent
 - Teaching based on university entrance exam
 - Pursuit of strong results
 - Parents request more work
 - Long hours of study
- Technology and media
 - New technology based curriculum
 - Incorporate more technology
 - Influence of T.V media

- Foreign western influence

The teaching node explored the teaching environment, especially the constraints on the teacher's approach to organising and controlling instructional material. The highlighted data in the above paragraph were used to develop question eight of the teachers' questionnaire presented below.

Questionnaire question 8: Do the following influence your teaching?

Constraints of teaching environment	agree
Strict use of text books	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of curriculum/ teachers manual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restriction to time/ school schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum driven by exams	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influence of technology	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influence of TV media	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.2.3 Construction of questionnaire: section nine.

The development of question nine of the teachers' questionnaire was based on the 'learning' node identified in the teachers' focus group data (Section 9.12). This question was also based on the teaching and learning node identified in the students' focus group data (in Section 9.14.3). These are listed below:

From teachers' focus group data, (Section 9.12):

- **Mistake**
 - Learn from mistakes

- **Memorising**
 - Helps learning process
 - Deepening knowledge
- **Interest** important
 - Own ideas, discussion based learning is ideal
- **Understanding**
 - Understanding as a part of learning
 - Importance.
- **Repetition**
 - Develop and build on existing knowledge
 - Builds a strong foundation of basic concepts
 - Students practice work while studying
 - Continual practice and repetition deepen understanding
- **Hard work**
 - Increases ability
 - Practice makes perfect

From students' focus group data, (Section 9.14.3):

- Lack of **encouragement** and praise
- More **dialogue** between students and teachers.

The teachers' learning nodes were concerned with beliefs about learning approaches and the learning environment. The students' teaching and learning node were concerned with teaching and learning approaches. The highlighted data illustrated in the above paragraph were used to develop question nine of teachers' questionnaire presented below.

Questionnaire question 9: Which of the following is important for teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning	agree
Results matter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn from mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Memorising	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student's interest	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>
Repetition	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouragement	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.2.4 Construction of questionnaire: section ten.

The development of question ten in the teachers' questionnaire was based on the 'social and cultural' node identified in focus group data (Section 9.13) which is listed below:

Results matter

- Diligent student,
- High value on education
- Hard work=good outcome

○ Good grade reflects good student

- Study, study, and study, earlier better
- Many after school programs
- Working towards university placement
- Education fever

- Status conscious
- Society demands elite
- School, occupation matters
- High achievement
- High status
- University prestige status
- Level of status and education help marriage selection
- Uphold family status
 - Traditional values
- Value
- Taught
 - Core subjects included
 - Moral education
 - Traditional values
 - Formal language
- Students are like family
 - Less homework since lots of work outside
 - ‘Our student..’, ‘our school..’
- Parental involvement
 - Demand more work
 - Korean saying reflects family support for education
 - Grandparent wealth,
 - Parental devotion
 - Child’s will power
 - Managerial mothers
- Spend large money after school and tuition
 - Move housing
 - Overseas education

The teachers’ social and cultural nodes were concerned with the values and attitudes towards education and Korean pedagogy. The highlighted data, illustrated in the above

paragraph was used to develop question ten in the teachers' questionnaire, presented below.

Questionnaire question 10: Which of the following do you agree with?

Social and cultural	agree
Results are important	<input type="checkbox"/>
Status of university equals economic status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good students reflect good grades	<input type="checkbox"/>
Achievement uphold family status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traditional cultural values are transmitted in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students are like family	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong parental involvement in education	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.3 Construction of questionnaire: 2. Students.

The first seven questions in the students' questionnaire provided background information. This data helped when comparing responses between groups of respondents. Questions eight to eleven were based on the four nodes identified in the student focus group data. These were concerned with the process of student learning, beliefs about teaching and approaches to learning. Appendix 4 illustrates the original Korean version and the English translated student questionnaire. The following illustrates how the data identified in the focus groups helped develop the students' questionnaire sections eight to eleven.

10.3.1 Construction of student questionnaire: section eight.

The ‘school’ node identified in the student focus group (Section 9.14.1) was concerned with students’ understanding of school and learning. The school nodes are illustrated below:

- Learn
- Provide knowledge and information
- Not for enjoyment
- not for play but serious
- Don’t want to go to school

The highlighted focus group data in the above paragraph were used to develop question eight of students’ questionnaire, presented below;

Questionnaire question 8: Why do you go to school?

Q8: Meaning of school	agree
School is a place to play	<input type="checkbox"/>
School is a place to learn	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy doing school work	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
I go to school because I want to go to school	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.3.2 Construction of student questionnaire: section nine.

The ‘motivation’ node identified in the student focus group (Section 9.14.2) was concerned with students’ rationale for working and studying in school. The ‘motivation’ nodes are illustrated below:

- Knowledge advancement Intelligence respected,
- Function in society
 - Gain placement in society -(marriage, status)
- University placement
- Job opportunities
- Results important
- Teachers' influence
- Parents' high expectation and pressure

The highlighted focus group data illustrated in the above paragraph were used to develop question nine of the students' questionnaire.

Questionnaire question 9: What motivates you to learn?

Student motivation	agree
Knowledge advancement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help function in society	<input type="checkbox"/>
University placement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job prosperity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grade important	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents' high expectation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher influence	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.3.3 Construction of student questionnaire: section ten.

The 'teaching and learning' node identified in the student focus group (Section 9.14.3) was concerned with teaching and learning approaches in the classroom. These nodes are illustrated below:

- More fun and hands on activity
 - Only work
- Computer presentation
- Blackboard
- Clear explanation and direction
 - Teachers provide information and guide students
- Lack of encouragement and praise
- More dialogue between students and teachers.

The highlighted focus group data illustrated in the above paragraph were used to develop question ten of the students' questionnaire presented below;

Questionnaire question 10: Which style of teaching do you prefer?

Teaching and learning	agree
Activity based projects	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blackboard work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear explanation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussion based	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.3.4 Construction of student questionnaire: section eleven.

Question eleven consisted of a list of subjects that were drawn up to explore the numbers and types of after school activity students attended in this study.

Questionnaire question 11: Which after school programmes do you take?

Afterschool supplementary programmes	Agree
Maths	<input type="checkbox"/>
English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing/reading	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other language	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art/music/other	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.4 Sample selection procedure.

As in the focus group samples, Mr Park, an officer in the Seoul division of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Korea helped with the sample selection of the schools. Cluster sampling was more manageable for data collection for questionnaires. See Chapter 6 for methodology information. Schools were chosen to reflect a range of socioeconomic status of school catchment areas. The socio-economic statuses of the catchment area were based on the current rent and housing prices surrounding the school. For school selection, Mr Park used convenience sampling in the

selected areas because they were easily accessible. Table 10.1 illustrates the school catchment area and the number of respondents from each school.

Table 10.1 School catchment area and total number of respondents			
School	Economic status	Teacher respondent	Student respondent
1	Low	35	35
2	Mid	36	36
3	High	31	35
4	Low-Mid	30	33
5	Low	30	27
6	Low-mid	36	36
7	High	33	31
8	Mid	30	35
9	Low-mid	34	34
Total	No. of respondents	295	302

10.4.1 Pre-check.

The first draft of the questionnaire was checked by three colleagues and comments were made on the wording, clarity, ambiguity and other related issues in response to the items on the questionnaire. The focus of the pre-check was to get feedback about individual items, whether each question was clear, simple and unambiguous (Robson, 2002). Then, changes were made based on their comments and the questionnaires were re-developed.

10.4.2 Return rate.

In total, 648 questionnaires (324 teachers and 324 students) were sent out to nine schools in the Seoul region and 597 questionnaires were returned (294 teachers and 302 students). These figures represent a total return rate of 92% (91% teachers and 93% of students).

10.4.3 Procedure for data collection.

Nine packages were sent to Mr Park. Each package contained thirty six teacher and thirty six student questionnaires (in total 648 questionnaires), an instruction sheet and a letter containing details of the study and information guaranteeing anonymity, the right to participate and to withdraw (see Appendix 5). Originally, the package should have contained only thirty five teacher and thirty five student questionnaires but the printers provided one extra copy which changed the total number.

Mr Park posted the packages containing the questionnaires to each of the nine schools. The instruction sheet enclosed with each set of questionnaires contained directions to distribute the questionnaires to students in the current fifth or sixth grade and to any teacher who currently taught at the school. The school was asked to return the completed questionnaires in the envelope provided back to Mr Park (see Appendix 5). Once all the questionnaires were returned, I collected the envelopes containing the completed questionnaires from Mr Park.

10.4.4 Method of analysis.

To help with data management, the program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Scientist) was used in analysis of the questionnaire findings (Muijs, 2004). The SPSS program generated descriptive statistical data for this study such as frequency counts and also helped create graphical representation of the data. In addition, inferential analysis was performed using the Pearson's chi-square test of significance. Inferential statistics allow the researcher to make a statement of the probability that an observed difference between groups was likely to be attributable to random sampling factors (Muijs, 2004).

10.4.5 Acknowledgement of limitations.

Questionnaires are usually relatively economical and inexpensive, and it is possible to gather information from a large number of people. Nonetheless, there are limitations as well. I acknowledge that there was no way of checking misinterpretations and unintelligible replies by the respondents. Also, there was no way to tell how truthful a respondent was being or how much feeling a respondent put into the replies. However, to compensate this limitation, observations and the follow up interviews were conducted in the next stage of data collection. The observation data helped compare and contrast the findings from the questionnaire study which is further discussed in Chapter 10.

I also acknowledge that there is a possibility of bias with the chosen sample of students and teachers who took part in the questionnaire. Although, I requested that the vice-principal randomly allocate students and teachers to take part in the questionnaire, there is nevertheless a possibility of bias with better students and better or more competent teachers being invited to take part.

Further, a major limitation of the questionnaire was simply the design, particularly the simple Agree / Disagree response categories. A four point scale (e.g.: YES yes no NO) would still have allowed dichotomous grouping of responses (by grouping all positive responses together and all negative) but would have allowed a much more sophisticated level of statistical analysis. Moreover, some of the questions had very obvious replies. For example, who is likely to disagree that grades are important? Another comment to the design of the questionnaire is the simplicity of the questions. For example, the teaching environment and the use of textbooks was questioned, but did not specify which textbook. Also, more specific and detailed questions would have been better. For example, teaching positions may enable comparison of responses of teachers in more, or less, senior posts.

10.5 Results: 1. Teachers.

Table 10.2 and table 10.3 illustrate teachers' background information. Their ages ranged from 21-60 years. However, the study showed many more female teachers: 88.8% compared to 10.8% of male teachers.

Table 10.2 Teachers' age

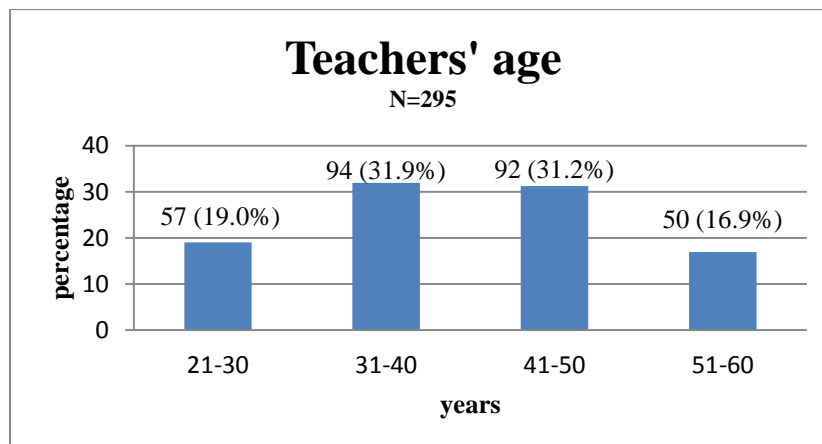
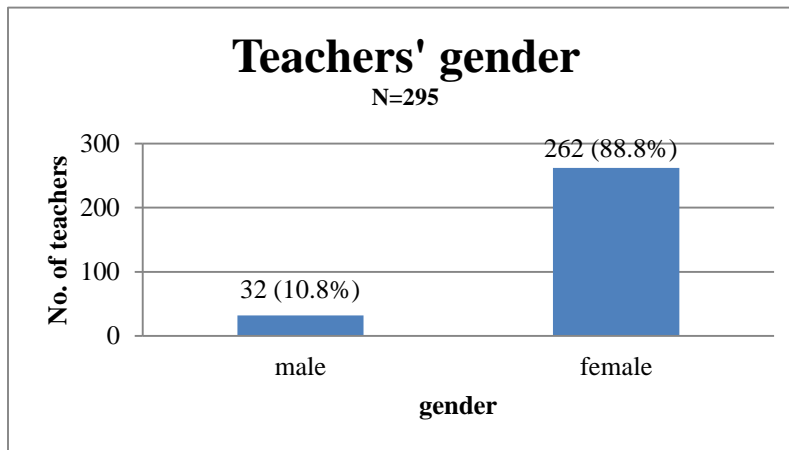


Table 10.3 Teachers' gender



10.5.1 Teachers' views on the Education system.

Question seven of the teachers' questionnaire examined the impact of the decentralisation policy on teachers' planning and decision making procedures in classrooms. The results are summarised in Table 10.4.

Questionnaire question 7: Which of the following are involved in planning and decision making procedures in schools and classrooms?

Table 10.4 Teachers' involvement	
	Agreeing %
Teachers involvement in decision making	43.7
New ideas encouraged	25.4
Have authority to choose how lessons taught	28.5
Have authority to choose textbook	6.1

The table shows that although 43.7% of teachers agreed that they were involved in decision making, only 6.1% thought they had the authority to choose text books when teaching.

10.5.2 Teaching environment.

Question eight of the teachers' questionnaire was concerned with the teaching environment, specifically the constraints on the teacher. The results are summarised in Table 10.5.

The teachers' responses regarding the constraints imposed by of textbooks and teaching manuals on teaching instruction are consistently high. These results were tested and compared with findings from observation data to test for consistency and are discussed in Chapter 11.

Questionnaire question 8: Do the following influence your teaching?

Table 10.5 Teaching environment	
Section 8	Agreeing %
Textbook	94.0
Teachers manual, curriculum	93.0
Time, school schedule	74.6
Exams	89.2
Technology	61.0
Media	80.4

10.5.3 Beliefs about learning.

Question nine in the teachers' questionnaire focused on teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning strategies.

Questionnaire question 9: Which of the following is important for teaching and learning?

Table 10.6 Belief about teaching and learning	
Section 9	Agreeing %
Learning from mistakes	76.3
Memorising	61.7
Student interest	90.9
Understanding important	90.8
Repetition	71.9
Encouragement	55.6
Discussion	76.9

10.5.4 Social and cultural aspects.

Question ten in the teachers' questionnaire examined teachers' views on social and cultural aspects of teaching and learning. The results are summarised in Table 10.7.

Questionnaire question 10: Which of the following do you agree with?

Table 10.7 social and cultural aspects	
Section 10	Agreeing %
Results are important	80.6
University - econ status	89.9
Good student - good grades	88.9
Uphold family status	80.4
Transmit values and culture	81.1
Student are like family	63.8
Parents' involvement	75.9

10.6 Chi-square test: 1. Teachers.

The Pearson's chi square test was used to see whether a statistically significant relationship existed between two variables. Chi-square tests were conducted to exam the relationship between:

- School catchment area and class population.
- Teachers' age and teachers' responses.

10.6.1 School catchment area and number of students in class.

The results of the chi-square test between the socio-economic level of catchment area and the number of students in the classrooms are illustrated in Table 10.8. A highly

significant difference between these two variables (χ^2 : 83.50, $p < 0.000$) showed that students in the low socio-economic classes were in significantly smaller classes than students in high socio-economic districts. While there were no significant differences in class size between middle and high catchment areas, nor between middle and low, there was a significant difference between high and low socioeconomic areas. This is shown in Table 10.8.

Table 10.8 Chi-square test: Catchment area and number of children								
			No students in class N=122			total	X ² df = 2	P
			26-30	31-35	36-40			
Income level of Catchment area	Low	O	53.0	5.0	0.0	58	83.5	0.000
		E	28.0	14.7	15.2			
	High	O	6.0	26.0	32.0	64		
		E	31.0	16.3	16.8			

10.6.2 Teachers' age and teachers' responses.

The chi-square test was also used to examine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between teachers' age and teachers' responses. However, the expected frequencies were not large enough and did not satisfy the assumptions for use of chi-square. The chi-square test is based on an approximation that works best when the expected frequency is more than 1 and no more than 20% of the expected frequencies are

less than five. By omitting the teacher in the age-group 61-70 the requirements of the test were met. Table 10.9 illustrates the new findings.

Four statistically significant differences were found between the four age groups:

- the relation between teachers' age and teachers' decision making was significant, ($\chi^2 = 12.037$, $p < 0.007$) which suggests that the older teachers were likely to make more decisions than younger teachers.
- the relation between teachers' age and new ideas was significant, ($\chi^2 = 24.988$, $p < 0.000$) which also suggests that the older teachers were likely to express more new ideas than younger teachers.

Once more, these results relate to the hierarchical nature of Korean society. The older and more experienced teachers received respect and maintained a certain dignity. Therefore, the older teachers were likely to make more decisions and could be more expressive than the younger teachers.

The other two significant differences between the teachers' age and their responses were:

- the relation between teachers' age and the importance of encouragement was significant, ($\chi^2 = 12.764$, $p < 0.005$,) again implying that older teachers had a more positive view of the value of encouragement;
- the relation between teachers' age and their belief that students are like family members was significant, ($\chi^2 = 13.278$, $p < 0.004$) implying that the youngest age-group of teachers was less likely to regard students as family members.

These two results suggest that the rank and position of the teachers affected their teaching approaches in the classroom.

Table 10.9 Chi-square test: Age of teacher and teacher’s response								
Teachers response	A-Agree D-Disagree	O-observed E-Expected	Age of teacher N=292				X² df=3	P
			21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60		
decision making	A	O	19.0	36.0	41.0	32.0	12.037	0.007
		E	25.0	41.2	39.9	21.9		
	D	O	38.0	58.0	50.0	18.0		
		E	32.0	52.8	51.1	28.1		
New ideas	A	O	7.0	20.0	21.0	26.0	24.988	0.000
		E	14.4	23.8	23.1	12.7		
	D	O	50.0	74.0	70.0	24.0		
		E	42.6	70.2	67.9	37.3		
choose lessons	A	O	12.0	23.0	31.0	18.0	5.027	0.170 NS
		E	16.4	27.0	26.2	14.4		
	D	O	45.0	71.0	60.0	32.0		
		E	40.6	67.0	64.8	35.6		
textbook	A	O	53.0	86.0	89.0	48.0	2.800	0.424 NS
		E	53.7	88.5	86.7	47.1		
	D	O	4.0	8.0	3.0	2.0		
		E	3.3	5.5	5.3	2.9		
curriculum	A	O	50.0	89.0	87.0	47.0	4.029	0.258 NS
		E	53.3	87.9	85.1	46.7		
	D	O	7.0	5.0	4.0	3.0		
		E	3.7	6.1	5.9	3.3		
schedule	A	O	46.0	72.0	64.0	37.0	2.564	0.464 NS
		E	42.6	70.3	68.8	37.4		
	D	O	11.0	22.0	28.0	13.0		
		E	14.4	23.7	23.2	12.6		
Exams	A	O	51.0	83.0	82.0	46.0	0.343	0.95 NS
		E	51.1	83.4	82.5	44.9		
	D	O	6.0	10.0	10.0	4.0		
		E	5.9	9.6	9.5	5.1		
Technology	A	O	32.0	60.0	59.0	28.0	1.787	0.618 NS
		E	34.8	57.4	56.2	30.5		
	D	O	25.0	34.0	33.0	22.0		
		E	22.2	36.6	35.8	19.5		
Media	A	O	40.0	76.0	78.0	42.0	6.536	0.088 NS
		E	46.2	76.2	73.0	40.0		
	D	O	17.0	18.0	12.0	8.0		
		E	10.8	17.8	17.0	9.5		
		O	45.0	74.0	70.0	35.0		

mistakes	A	E	43.7	72.1	69.8	38.4	1.635	0.651 NS
		O	12.0	20.0	21.0	15.0		
	D	E	13.3	21.9	21.2	11.6		
Student interest		O	50.0	87.0	84.0	46.0	1.264	0.738 NS
	A	E	52.1	86	83.2	45.7		
		O	7.0	7.0	7.0	4.0		
	D	E	4.9	8.0	7.8	4.3		
Memorising		O	30.0	53.0	64.0	33.0	6.075	0.108 NS
	A	E	34.3	58.5	56.1	31.1		
		O	25.0	41.0	26.0	17.0		
	D	E	20.7	35.5	33.9	18.9		
Understanding		O	48.0	86.0	85.0	47.0	4.689	0.196 NS
	A	E	51.7	85.0	84.0	45.3		
		O	8.0	6.0	6.0	2.0		
	D	E	4.3	7.0	7.0	3.7		
Encouragement		O	27.0	44.0	54.0	38.0	12.764	0.005
	A	E	31.5	52.3	51.1	28.1		
		O	29.0	49.0	37.0	12.0		
	D	E	24.5	40.7	39.9	21.9		
Dialogue		O	42.0	70.0	73.0	44.0	4.166	0.244 NS
	A	E	44.1	74.0	71.6	39.3		
		O	14.0	24.0	18.0	6.0		
	D	E	11.9	20.0	19.4	10.7		
Results		O	50.0	78.0	72.0	36.0	5.598	0.133 NS
	A	E	45.4	76.2	73.8	40.5		
		O	6.0	16.0	19.0	14.0		
	D	E	10.6	17.8	17.2	9.5		
University - econ status		O	52.0	81.0	86.0	44.0	3.419	0.331 NS
	A	E	51.0	84.6	82.8	44.6		
		O	4.0	12.0	5.0	5.0		
	D	E	5.0	8.4	8.2	4.4		
Good student - good grades		O	48.0	85.0	82.0	45.0	1.701	0.637 NS
	A	E	50.8	83.7	81.0	44.5		
		O	9.0	9.0	9.0	5.0		
	D	E	6.2	10.3	10.0	5.5		
values and culture		O	41.0	63.0	74.0	35.0	4.373	0.224 NS
	A	E	41.6	68.6	67.1	35.7		
		O	16.0	31.0	18.0	14.0		
	D	E	15.4	25.4	24.9	13.3		
Student family		O	26.0	62.0	59.0	40.0	13.278	0.004
	A	E	36.0	60.4	58.5	32.0		
		O	30.0	32.0	32.0	10.0		
	D	E	20.0	33.6	32.5	17.9		
Parents involvement		O	41.0	68.0	72.0	42.0	3.463	0.326 NS
	A	E	43.5	71.8	69.5	38.2		
		O	16.0	26.0	19.0	8.0		
	D	E	13.5	22.2	21.5	11.8		

10.7 Results: 2. Students.

The first seven questions in the students' questionnaire illustrate students' background information. These are summarised in Table 10.10, Table 10.11 and Table 10.12.

Table 10.10 Students' age

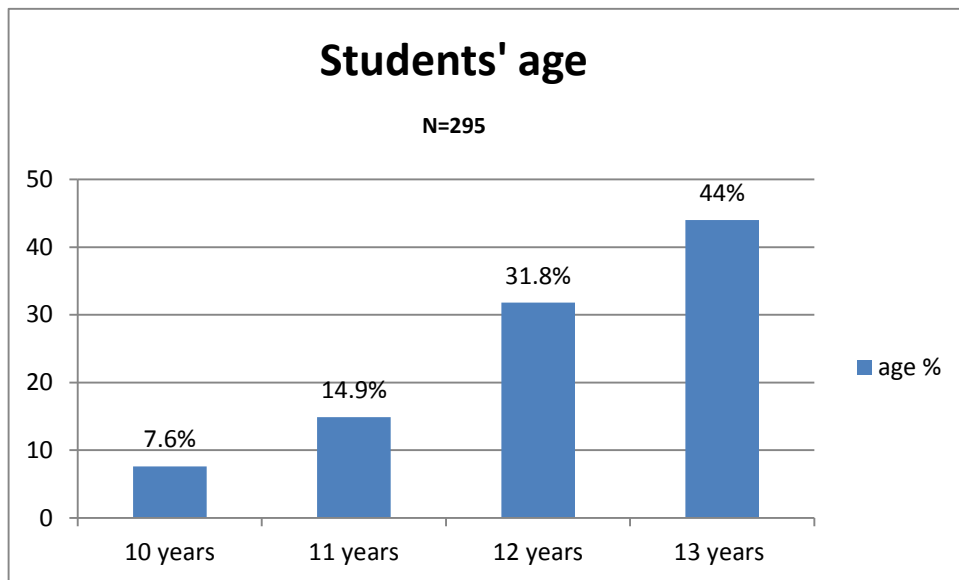
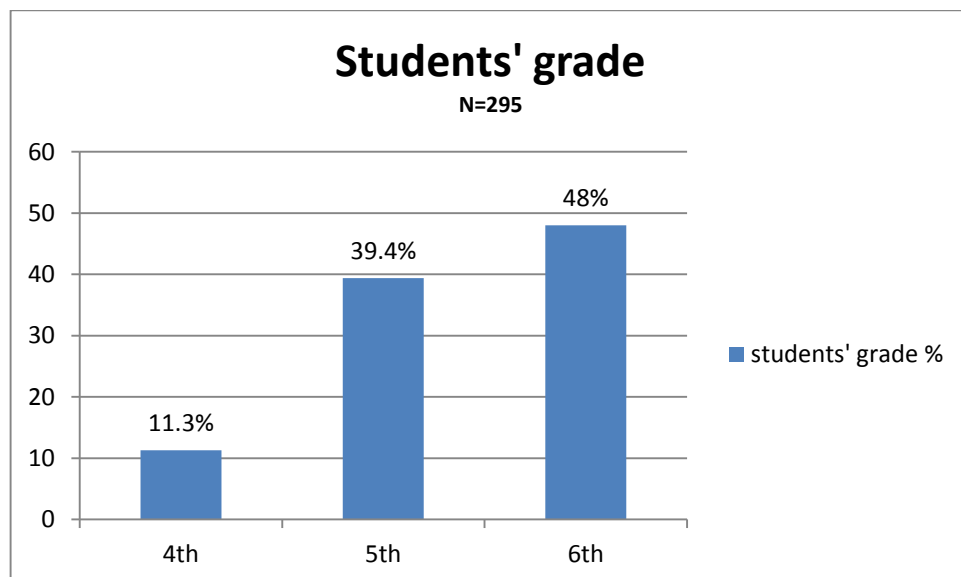
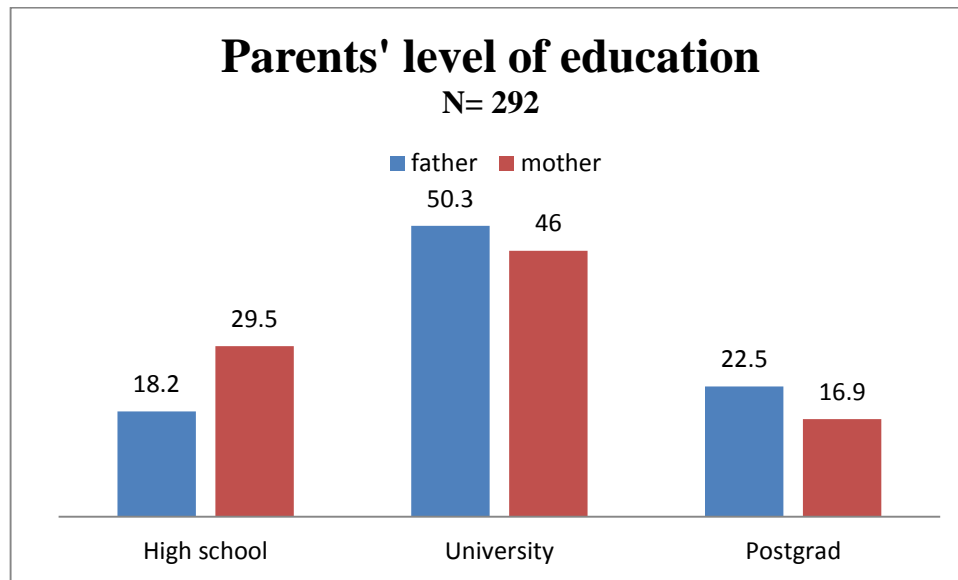


Table 10.11 Students' grade



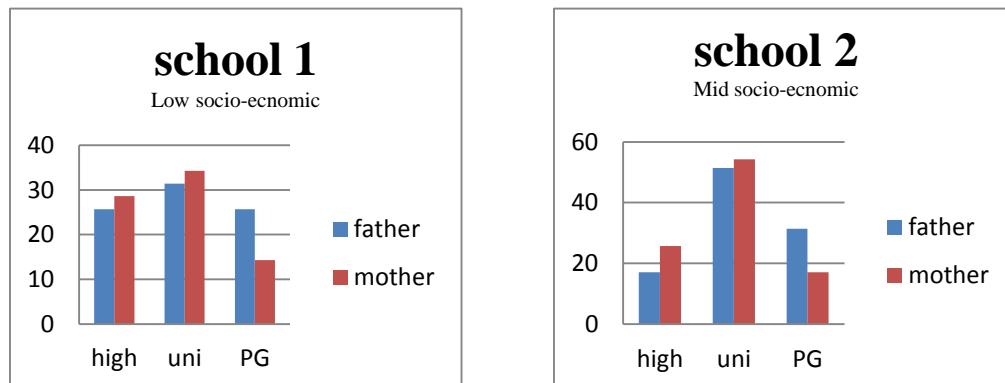
The findings showed similarity between the fathers' and mothers' levels of education, see Table 10.12. On closer examination, parents' levels of education were similar also in the different school catchment areas, see Table 10.13.

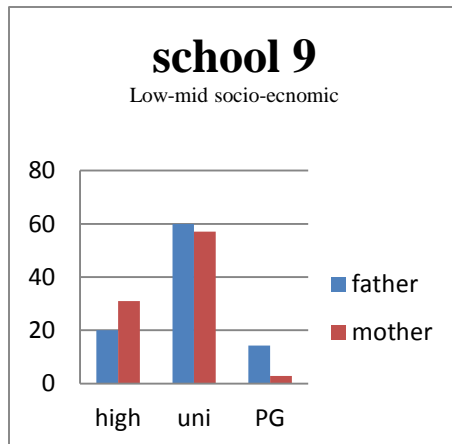
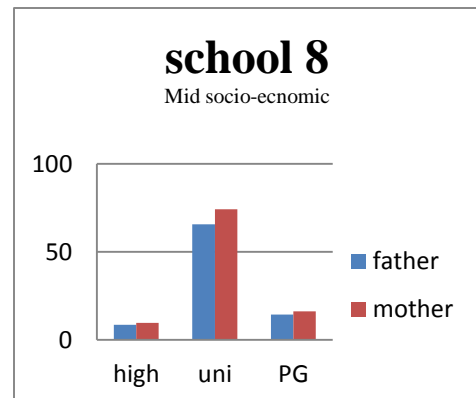
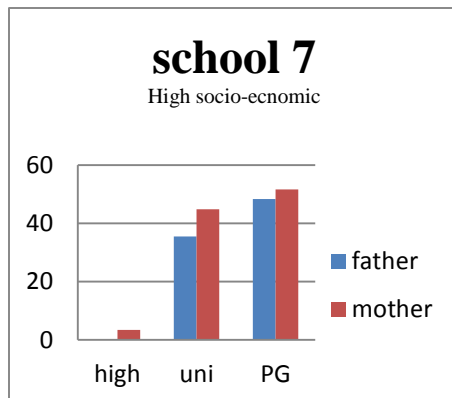
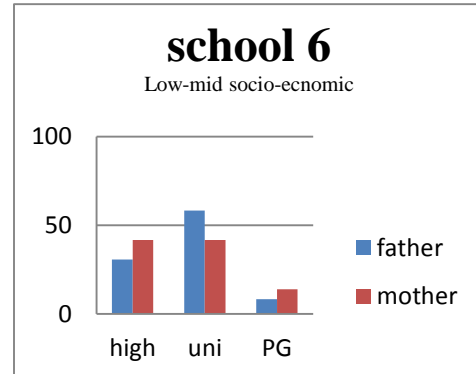
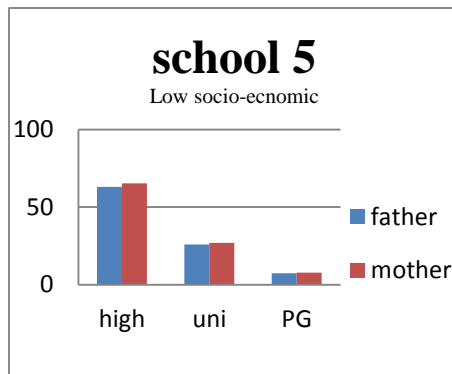
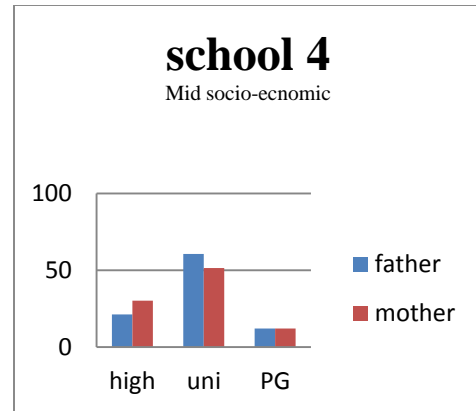
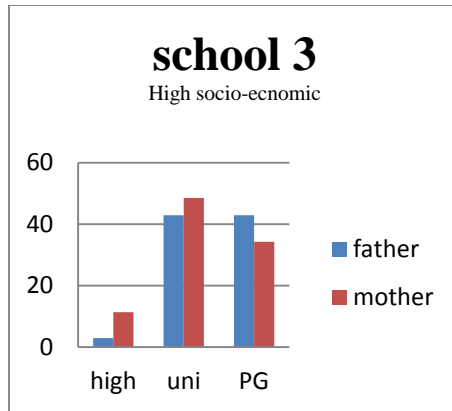
Table 10.12 Parents' level of education



Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship exists between parents' level of education and the school's socio-economic catchment area, see section 10.7.5 for details.

Table: 10.13 the nine schools and their catchment areas





10.7.1 Students' understanding of school.

Question eight of the students' questionnaire was designed to explore students' thoughts and perceptions with reference to school as a place. The results are summarised in Table 10.14.

It is interesting that 93.0% of Korean children regarded school as a place for learning, and fewer than five per cent thought that school was a place for play. The findings also showed that although 60.6% of Korean students enjoyed learning, only 50.7% wanted to go to school and even less, 42.1%, enjoyed school work. This confirmed that Korean students took education and learning seriously and appreciated learning. Whether they enjoyed school work is questionable.

Table 10.14 Meaning of school	
	%
Play	4.6
Learn	93.0
Enjoy school work	42.1
Enjoy learning	60.6
Want to go to school	50.7

10.7.2 Learning acts and motivation.

Question nine of the students' questionnaire examined students' perceptions of and motivation for learning. The results are summarised in Table 10.15.

Korean students' goal of learning is the advancement of knowledge (85.1% of students) and 71.2% of students recognised the importance of grades. Also, a high 76.5% of students understood that learning helps placement into university, while 79.5% of students were motivated to learn to benefit themselves in everyday life. Students' motivation to learn in order to benefit from entering university and gaining job placement is not surprising. But, we should not forget that these data were collected from primary school students. From a young age, children recognise that the Korean education system is very competitive. It affects students' views even in the primary school years.

Table 10.15 Students' motivation for learning	
	%
Advancement of knowledge	85.1
Help function in society	79.5
University placement	76.5
Job prosperity	66.9
Grade important	71.2
Parents' expectations	24.5
Teacher influence	24.2

10.7.3 Students' teaching and learning experience.

Question ten of the students' questionnaire, examined students' teaching and learning experience. The results are summarised in Table 10.16.

Table 10.16 Students' learning preference	
	%
Activity based projects	75.2
Computer presentation	44.4
Blackboard work	36.1
Clear explanation	83.4
Discussion	42.7

A high 75.2% of students preferred activity based projects. That is not unexpected as children usually enjoy activities. However, 83.4% of students' preference for clear explanation compared to 44.4% of students' preference to computer presentation is unexpected because students usually enjoy animated computer presented work. The data indicates Korean students' strong commitment to learning and understanding.

10.7.4 Afterschool activity.

Question eleven of the students' questionnaire aimed to explore the category and the number of afterschool programmes students attended. The results are summarised in Table 10.17. The results showed Korean students generally attended more afterschool programmes that cater for maths and English.

Table 10.17 Students' afterschool programmes	
Students afterschool supplement programmes	%
Maths	64.9
English	66.2
Writing/reading	37.7
Reading	17.2
Computer	22.8
Science	24.8
Other language	7.3

10.7.5 Chi-square test: 2. Students.

The Pearson's Chi square test was conducted to see whether a statistically significant relationship existed between parents' level of education and the socio-economic catchment area of the school. Table 10.18 and Table 10.19 show the results. The relation between school catchment area and fathers' level of education variable was significant, ($\chi^2 = 26.1$, $p < 0.000$). The result implied that fathers' level of education was likely to be associated with the socioeconomic status of catchment area.

The chi square test for mothers' level of education and area of catchment also showed a significant relationship, $\chi^2 (2, N=115) = 28.8$, $p < 0.000$. Like the fathers' test shown above, the mothers' level of education was also significantly associated with the socioeconomic status of catchment area. Again, while there were no significant

differences in the level of education between middle and high catchment areas, nor between middle and low, there was a significant difference between high and low socioeconomic areas. This is shown in Table 10.18 and Table 10.19.

Table 10.18 Chi square result: catchment area and fathers' level of education							
			Fathers' level of education N=111			χ^2 df= 2	P value
			High	Uni	PG		
Catchment area	Low	O	20.0	23.0	11.0	26.1	0.000
		E	10.2	23.8	19.9		
	High	O	1.0	26.0	30.0		
		E	10.8	25.2	21.1		

Table 10.19 Chi square result: catchment area and mothers' level of education							
			Mothers' level of education N=115			χ^2 df= 2	P value
			High	Uni	PG		
Catchment area	Low	O	27.0	19.0	7.0	28.8	0.000
		E	14.7	22.6	15.7		
	High	O	5.0	30.0	27.0		
		E	17.3	26.4	18.3		

10.8 Discussion.

Although decentralisation has been introduced in the new curriculum, the hierarchical nature of the Korean culture and the traditional centralisation of other parts of the education system have limited the changes that have occurred. This confirms teachers' focus group data. However, 43.7% of teachers' indicated they are involved in decision making process in the school which indicates some change, albeit slow.

Furthermore, questionnaire data confirmed teachers' strict use of textbooks as teaching tools. It also suggested that the regulation of the curriculum and guideline manuals placed restrictions on their teaching methods. Teachers further claimed that teaching instructions are based on the content of assessment and this also restricted variation in teaching methods. Yet a high number of teachers' implied that they incorporated technology in teaching instruction, as encouraged by the reform. In classroom observation, the next stage of data collection, it will be useful to observe teachers' approach to control of the classroom, and especially how they incorporate the textbooks, technology and other teaching materials in the lesson instructions.

In the questions regarding encouragement and dialogue, teachers showed high responses. To explore these findings further, observations were made of teachers' use of dialogue as a teaching method and of their use of praise and encouragement. These will be reported and discussed in chapter 10.

Further, the 63.8% of teachers reporting that students are considered as part of the family showed concern for the students' well-being. How this belief affects teachers' and

students' relationships and behaviour and the effect of Korean hierarchical and cultural relations will be reported in the next stage of data collection.

The questionnaire findings indicated students' strong motivation for learning and determination to work hard to accomplish higher goals. In the final stage of data collection observations were carried out of students' effort and learning approaches. These will be reported and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 11. Results: 3. Observations and follow-up interviews.

11.1 Introduction.

First, the chapter describes the construction of the observation schedule and the questions that lead to the follow up interviews. This is followed with description of sample selection, data collection procedure and method of analysis. Then, the chapter presents the results of the observations and follow up interviews.

This study undertook to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a common pedagogy in a sample of national primary schools in Seoul?
2. If so, what are its distinctive features?
3. How does the current social and cultural context of Korea influence the common pedagogy in primary states schools in Seoul?

11.2 Observation and follow up interviews.

Observation and follow up interviews were the third and last stage in data collection for the study. They were conducted during April 2009 - September 2009. In total, eight classrooms were observed in four schools in Seoul. Observations were conducted in two stages. The first stage was pre-observation of the school, its building and the classroom. The second stage was a structured non-participant observation of one full classroom lesson. The follow up interviews were conducted directly after each observation. See

Chapter 5 for information on the overall methodology and Chapter 7 for observation and follow up methodology.

11.2.1 Development of research instrument: 1. Observation schedule.

The mixed method study was designed so that the findings from previously collected data could help to develop the next stage of research. In this study, the data from the focus group interviews helped develop the questions for the questionnaires. Next, the findings from the questionnaire helped to identify the kind of events or responses that would require further investigation through direct observation. The questionnaire data identified four areas that needed to be observed and are discussed as follows.

11.2.2 Teaching tools and instruments.

Focus group and questionnaire findings demonstrated restrictions placed on teachers with respect to teaching methods, approaches and tools. Therefore, the predetermined check list involved observing teachers' management and the use of teaching equipment and materials, because these reflect the conditions in which the education system operates. The different teaching methods brought up in the focus groups and questionnaire data are listed below:

- Working with Textbooks
- Use of Computer program/TV
- Use of traditional blackboard
- Working with activity/work sheet

11.2.3 Methods of Instruction.

The questionnaire indicated a little over half of teachers (55.6%) claimed encouragement is valuable and that dialogue is a valuable process for learning. Repetition and memorising were also effective learning tools mentioned by teachers. Therefore teachers' methods of instruction, communication between the teacher and student, teachers' actions while teaching and how they went about interacting with students were observed. These items are drawn up below:

- Teachers explanation of key elements of lesson
- Questioning between teacher and students
- Teachers praise and encouragement
- Class discussion (teacher/student, student/student)
- Students repetition

11.2.4 Students' learning approaches.

Effort and hard work were believed to help improve and increase student achievement. Therefore, student behaviour and learning approaches were important aspects to observe. The items to be observed are listed below:

- Student seeking attention/help
- Student is individually engaged on task
- Teacher is presenting work on blackboard while student is listening
- Teacher is presenting work on computer while student is listening
- Teaching with textbook while student listens
- Student is working on worksheet/activity while listening

11.2.5 Classroom structure.

In response to teachers' descriptions of rigid classroom organisation, classroom structure and the rigidity of the lessons were observed. In order to do this, video recording of one full lesson was examined closely and is reported in section 11.7.1.

11.2.6 Development of research instrument: 2. Follow up interviews.

Follow up interviews were informal and brief. Questions that I wanted to ask or things that needed clarification were noted during or immediately after structured observation. Not a lot of time was available to construct detailed questions as follow up interviews were conducted directly after observations. However the interviews were based on questions about what was observed during class observation and, therefore, did not require much construction time. The development of these questions and responses are both presented below (in Section 11.8).

11.3 Sample.

Observation and follow up samples were selected using purposive sampling. Refer to section 5.2.3 for details of purposive sample methodology. Mr Park from the Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology helped locate four schools for the final part of this study. It would have been ideal to observe classes that participated in the questionnaire. However, questionnaires were analysed and the observation schedule developed around October 2008. With less than four months to the end of the school year (Korean school ends mid-February,) and with many disruptions with Christmas and New

Year holidays, it was impossible to arrange a convenient date and time with the classes that had participated in the questionnaire study. Therefore, arrangements were made in the new school year with different participants. Four schools which differed in socio-economic status of school catchment area like previous samples were purposively selected. Table 11.1 illustrates details of the schools in which observations and interviews for the third stage of data collection took place.

11.4 Procedure for data collection: 1. Structured observation.

Arrangements were made to meet with the principal of each selected school. The principal had prearranged before our meeting with a teacher who volunteered to take part in the observation study. During the meeting, I explained the observation procedure and answered any questions that the teacher might have. The teacher was instructed to explain to the class prior to observation, all the necessary information about the procedure for that day. Information about this study and consent forms were sent to parents. See Appendix 8. A convenient date was arranged with the teacher for the observation to take place.

As previously mentioned, there were two stages of data collection. The first stage was conducted during the meeting with the teacher. To situate the place of activity, school grounds and classrooms were observed and notes as well as photos taken to serve as background and supporting evidence. For the second stage of observation, a video tape was set up and turned on before class commenced and prior to students' arrival, in order not to draw attention to the machine. The video was set up facing the students, while I sat

at the back of the classroom in an inconspicuous location, to reduce the potential effect of observer reactivity.

The predesigned checklist was used for the duration of one full lesson (copy of schedule is attached in Appendix 6). At each three minute interval, at that precise moment, like a snap picture of the classroom, the teacher's and students' behaviour were observed and the activity or behaviour was ticked on the predesigned list. The aim was to obtain a more objective picture than was possible with narrative records of classroom activity. Unlike narratives, observation is not open-ended, as it is limited to what happens in the specified time interval. Also, structured observation is less time consuming, and offered a way to observe and record two or more children simultaneously. See Chapter 7 on methodology for observation.

11.4.1 Procedure for data collection: 2. Follow up interviews.

Follow up interviews allowed the opportunity to clarify behaviour or to verify additional information needed to supplement the observation data. Follow up interviews were conducted face to face, directly with the teacher, straight after each classroom observation. Follow up interviews with students were difficult because they would have had to remain present after school. However, one question was asked to a small number of students that were available for a short period of time after class. The results of the follow up discussion are described below in section 11.8. Questions varied for each teacher as questions were dependent on the situation observed. The list of questions that were asked during the follow up interviews with the teachers and students are attached in Appendix 7.

Table 11.1 School observation demography									
School	Econ status	School age in years	No. of students' in school, No. of teachers' in school	students' no.	Teacher's age	Teacher's gender	Teacher's experience	Grade	subject
School R		N/A	(interrupted by fire drill)						
School R	L	9	802, 35	28	40	M	35	5	Maths
School J	M	59	1077 , 71	31	20	M	1	3	English
School J	M	59	1077 , 71	31	20	F	2	3	Korean
School M	L	29	1115, 66	28	30	F	11	3	Maths
School M	L	29	1115, 66	26	26	F	6	3	Korean
School S	H	29	860, 39	32	35	F	15	4	Korean
School S	H	29	860, 39	32	35	F	15	4	Science

11.5 Method of analysis.

In total eight lessons were observed for this study, two in each school. However, only seven lessons were used in the data analysis. One lesson was disregarded in the analysis due to interruption by a fire drill.

11.5.1 Data analysis: 1. Observation.

Observation was the last stage of data collection, and provided evidence on discrepancies in previously collected focus group and questionnaire findings. Observation study in a naturalistic setting can provide a more objective picture of the socio-cultural influences on teachers' and students' behaviour in the classroom. Observations typically do not require the observer to make any strong inferences or judgments about the behaviour observed in the classroom. In other words, these low inference observational systems provide specific and easy identifiable behaviour that observers can easily code.

Frequency counts recorded the number of times the teachers and students were involved in each of the activities listed on the predetermined schedule at three minute intervals within each fifty minute lesson. See Appendix 6 for the predetermined observation schedule that was used during the lesson observations.

11.5.2 Analysis: 2. Follow up interviews.

The responses from the follow up interviews are reported in the order that they were asked and were only referred to when needed.

11.6 Results of observations: 1. School environment.

This section presents the first stage of observation. It was an initial examination of the surrounding area, to situate and to place the activities of students and teacher behaviour in the classroom and school. The surrounding environment provides a picture of the social world in which the student and teacher interact with one another and with the environment. This is followed by the presentation of results for the second stage of structured lesson observation.

11.6.1 Buildings.

The school building design did not vary in style or shape and all four schools that were observed looked similar in appearance. Three of the school buildings were four storeys high and one of the buildings was five storeys high. The buildings were long, rectangular shaped with rows of windows holding individual classrooms and offices. See Figure 11.2 below. The school buildings were positioned on a square block of land with the building near one end of the land. All schools had outdoor space, which consisted of light soil for the playground (one with artificial grass) and a small area with play equipment. The school grounds were surrounded by a fence with sparse trees and plants along the fenced area.

There was parking behind the school building; however, this depended on the size of the school and layout of the building. With one school, the playing field doubled for parking space. The name of the school was written across the school building (see Figure 11.2). The school administration office, and the offices for teachers and the principal,

were located at the centre of the school building for convenience, as the buildings were long.

All the school buildings and grounds had more in common with each other than variations. The main entrances were decorated with minimal displays with the school name and the school motto, see Figure 11.3. The slight variations to the décor in the entrance were trophy cabinets, wall pictures and the colour of the décor, see Figure 11.4. The motto from each school has been translated as follows. ‘School full of dream and happiness’; ‘Loveable and inspiring school’; ‘Widen your dreams to the future and to the world’ and ‘Be an honest and fair person’. In most schools the entrance hall was situated in the middle of the school building.

Each primary school building consisted of classrooms, playground, gym, and classrooms for special classes like English zones, computer labs, and art and science labs. All schools had a library with a collection of books which were available for student loan. Two schools had a separate English library for English books and audio equipment which were not for loan. All schools had a kitchen where hot lunches were prepared; the food was delivered by a food cart and distributed to the children in the classroom. In the past the children provided their own cutlery, however from 2011 schools provided sterilised cutlery for all students to use. See Figure 11.5.

Figure 11.2 School building



Figure 11.3 School mottos



Figure 11.4 Entrance halls



Figure 11.5 School kitchen and the food carts



11.6.2 Classrooms.

A long corridor led down the entire length of the building. Each corridor opened into a classroom similar in size along the length of the building. There were two doors opening into each classroom, one located to the front and one to the rear. Between these doors were students' storage spaces. On entering the classroom, you were faced with a large window facing the playground. The classrooms were brightly lit from the large windows which covered the top half of one wall facing the playground. The classrooms were fitted with a blackboard and teacher's desk with a computer connected to the large TV screen, students' desks and shelves containing books, cupboards and storage space for the students' and teachers' use, and just enough walking space between these.

All classrooms were fitted with the same equipment and supplies. The equipment and supplies were upgraded, depending on the age of the equipment. Recently in Seoul, all classrooms have been equipped with wall mounted TV screens and air conditioning. The condition of the school buildings and the latest technology of classroom equipment is evidence that education in Korea is considered important to society. The same standardised classroom equipment signifies that equal opportunities are given to all children.

Most classrooms had windows to one side of the room and a large board to the back of the classroom which displayed students' work. Each desk had a small tray shelf under the table, where the students could place their books. There is a hook on the side of the table, where students hang their bags. See classroom Figure 11.6.

Figure 11.6 Classrooms



Of the four classes that were observed, three had desks/chairs paired in rows facing the front, while one classroom had desks/chairs in a U shape, see Figure 11.6. The teacher's desk was usually placed to the front corner, and the blackboard in front with a big TV placed near the teacher's desk. There was a small book-shelf with a small arrangement of books for the students to read in their free time, usually before school started, during free time and when they had completed their work. The teacher's computer connected to the internet was the only computer in each classroom, and was also connected to the TV, where programs were presented to the class. There was a separate computer lab for the students. The blackboard had a small arrangement of notices on the side, usually regarding that day's schedule, date and the agenda. Depending on the school and location, the size of the school and classroom varied, as did the environment.

When students arrived at school and went to their classrooms, they had to change their ‘outside’ shoes for their ‘indoor’ shoes. These were simple rubber or fabric shoes that could be slipped on. Students carried them in their shoe bag on Monday and took them home on Friday to be washed. During the week, the shoe bag was kept outside the classrooms on shelves or on racks. These were to keep the floors and building clean of dirt, sand and mud. The teacher was observed to wear slipper or sandal-like shoes inside the classrooms.

All primary schools in Seoul follow the same time schedule, see Table 11.7. There is a ten minute recess between each forty minute lesson, and separate milk and lunch breaks.

Table 11.7 national school timetable		
Time	Duration (min)	Description
08:40-09:00	20	roll call and review of work
09:00-09:40	40	1 st period
09:40-09:50	10	milk break
09:50-10:30	40+10	2 nd period
10:40-11:20	40+10	3 rd period
11:30-12:10	40	4 th period
12:10-13:00	50	Lunch
13:00-13:40	40+10	5 th period
13:50-14:30	40	6 th period

11.7 Results of Observation: 2. Structured observation.

I ticked items on a predetermined schedule at three minute intervals when observing both the behaviour of the teacher and students in the classroom during one full fifty minute lesson. Therefore, I made sixteen or seventeen observations in each lesson. The results are summarised in Table 11.8.

Most of the observation findings corroborate the questionnaire data. There was high usage of textbooks and computer programs during instruction. Also, students were attentive and hard working in class, diligently working throughout the lesson. Teachers' and students' interaction by questioning and answering was frequently observed, 33 times. This is consistent with 90.8% of teachers' belief that understanding is important for learning. However, there were two inconsistencies between the questionnaire findings and observation data.

One inconsistency was that teachers rarely praised or encouraged students in the lesson observation. However, 55.6% of teachers' in the questionnaire claimed to consider that encouragement and praise were important. In the seven lesson observations, teachers praised or encouraged students only four times. The other inconsistency was the low amount of discussion observed. Yet 76.9% of teachers in the questionnaire had claimed discussions were an important part of the learning process.

Table 11.8 Structured observation results							
Activity	School name and subject						
T- teacher, S- student	R math	J Eng	J Kor	S math	S Kor	M Kor	M Science
T- teach with bbd	0	0	0	10	6	0	0
T- teach with computer presentation	9	4	7	0	5	4	4
T- teach with textbook	8	4	7	2	5	6	2
T- teach with worksheet	0	4	3	0	0	0	0
T- explain key concept	3	3	7	1	1	3	2
T- questions class/students	5	5	1	5	7	5	5
T- settling down class	1	2	1	2	1	0	1
T- Praise, encouragement	0	2	1	0	0	0	1
Dialogue/ discussion	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Repeating after teacher	0	8	0	4	0	0	2
S- questioning teacher	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S- listens to peer	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
S- engage on task (quiet)	3	0	0	4	2	2	6
S- listens /work from blackboard	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
S- listens /work off TV	6	4	3	0	1	2	3
S- listens /work from textbook	6	5	5	5	5	5	5
S- listens /work worksheet/activity	0	3	0	0	0	0	4

11.7.1 Results of sample lesson.

A lesson was closely examined from the sample of observation videos, see Table 11.8. A lesson is usually forty minutes long with a short ten minute recess. I acknowledge that each teacher and classroom may vary in each setting. However, exploration of a typical classroom structure and lesson layout further helped in understanding and explaining teachers' and students' behaviours.

The start and end of each lesson was precise. Every fifty minutes, the school bell rang to mark the end and start of a new lesson. There was a predictable rhythm to the day and to the lessons. Teachers appeared to have an instinctive grasp of time, organising the material to fill the forty minute lesson without pressure. The teacher followed each lesson by referring to the textbook, which seemed to provide exactly the right amount of material for the length of lesson and what had to be accomplished. This emphasized the rigid structure to the Korean classroom environment.

Further, the students used Korean honorific language throughout class observation. The student greeted the teacher with; '*an nyong ha seh yo*'. '*An nyong*' means hello and '*-ha seh yo*' is the honorific marker which is added to make the word formal. Also when referring to the teacher, the students uttered the word '*seonsaengnim*' meaning respected teacher. '*Seonsaeng*' means teacher and '*-nim*' is the affix to make it honorific. The usage of honorific language is consistent with previous data that honorific language is used throughout formal schooling. The use of honorific language created an environment of reverence, a boundary between the students and the teacher, creating respective roles which further accentuated the rigid classroom structure.

Lunch followed straight after a lesson observation, in which I was invited to join. I was waiting near the end of the line, when a student moved and told me to eat first. ‘mon yu desae yo’. This is directly translated to ‘first eat’. Although the students’ used the polite form of ‘eat’ (‘desae yo’ the polite word for eat) however, the word ‘you’ was not used in the sentence. Usually, in the Korean classrooms, the teacher receives food and starts to eat first.

Table 11.9 Typical lesson sample	
Approx. time (mins)	Activity
2	Preparation time
2	Recalling or discussion of previous lesson
3	Teacher’s objective(s) for the lesson
7	Explanation with questions in between
7	Video demonstration including teacher’s explanation
6	Explanation, direction for next activity
12	Experiment, answering question, activity, worksheet, workbook
5	Discussion, summary
6	Homework, free play, small recess

11.8 Results of teachers’ and students’ follow-up interviews.

1) The observed lessons were very fast paced and I was curious about the reasoning behind this. Q1. The lessons are structured and fast paced. Can you explain why?

A teacher suggested:

'Most children go to after school 'hakwons' (afterschool private academic programs). Children these days are very bright. For instance, I cannot teach the children basic Korean alphabet because most children learn before they enter school.'

The teacher claimed that students have additional lessons at after school academic programmes; therefore did not find the need to slow down. Also, the teacher claimed that usually all children are up to and beyond the expected standard. A teacher added:

'They have pre- knowledge of basic mathematical concepts of numbers and how to add and subtract. Some even know their times table before they enter school. So I cannot teach them too much basic information because they are taught before they come to classes'.

2) In the observation, teachers frequently referred to and taught with the textbooks. I wanted to question the teachers' use of textbooks and computer programmes as teaching tools. Also, teachers in both focus groups and questionnaire implied they frequently referred to the national curriculum and use of the activities provided with the textbooks because they lacked preparation time and were restricted by the curriculum guidelines.

Q2. I noticed you used the textbook and computer programmes when teaching. What are your reasons for using them? A teacher replied:

'I don't have much time left over to make lessons more creative because we are overburdened with paper work; however these internet sites are great as they have colourful presentation that is very useful in class'

3) The computer presented lesson was very well made with colourful animation and elaborate designs. Q3. The computer programme you used during your lesson was so professional. Did it take a long time to make them?

The teacher commented that schools provide access to commercial and non-commercial websites where they can download teaching material. The programmes are designed based on the national textbooks and are even linked together. A teacher commented:

'We can download material based on the textbooks from these internet sites as teaching material'.

4) The lesson incorporated an activity. I wanted to know if every lesson had an activity. Q4. Do you always incorporate an activity in your lessons?

The teacher implied that different types of activities are dependent on the subject taught in class, the type of lesson taught and availability of resources. Most importantly, time restriction, curriculum guidelines and resource availability may not allow for more activity and group based work. A teacher suggested:

'Activities are given depending on topic of study. Time restriction does not allow for full discussion and activity based projects. Students enjoy hands on activity but there is not enough equipment for all students to use in one go and they need to share in groups like the measuring scale.'

5) I was curious about the frequent ten minute break in between each lesson (not including the milk recess and lunch break). Q5. What do you think of the frequent ten minute breaks in between the lessons?

The teacher implied that these breaks give student time to refresh themselves and also helped maintain students' concentration. It also motivated students to stay on task. A teacher suggested:

'Students are reminded that if they are not on task, the 10 minute recess will decrease.'

6) In the observed lesson, the teacher made the whole class repeat each sentence a few times and this was noticed in some of the other lessons too. I wanted to ask the reason why teachers used repetition. Q6. Why did you get the students to repeat you?

The teacher suggested that repetition and practice helped students learn. A teacher claimed that:

'Repeating emphasizes the meaning and helps student learn.'

7) In the observed lesson, the students were well behaved and concentrated on the lesson with little distraction. I was curious if they were always well behaved. Q7. Are the students always well behaved and on task?

The teacher clearly implied that expected behaviour should not need encouragement. A teacher claimed that good behaviour is 'expected' and suggested:

'If I am not strict, they don't listen to me....'

'In the beginning of the term, I am very tough by setting rules and standards, regulations and expectations. I loosen my strictness near the end of the year but they still know the proper expectations and behaviour needs to be managed.'

The teacher also suggested that students' behaviour had become more disruptive compared to when the teacher was in school. A teacher argued that:

'Student behaviour has become very disruptive, not the behaviour from years ago'

The teacher implied that due to social change in the current society, the influx of western culture had caused changes in the relationship between the adult and the child. This change in behaviour was due to the relaxed home atmosphere, the boundary between parents and children having become more relaxed. Further, although the formal language continues to be used and taught in schools, the usage has declined in homes, especially between the parent and their child.

8) I was curious if the students used formal language all the time during school hours.

Q8. Does the student always use formal language during school hours?

The teacher replied that students are required to master the honorific language in the first couple of years of formal schooling. The usage of the honorific language is continued throughout the schooling years. The use of the honorific Korean language promoted respect for teachers and created a certain boundary between the teacher and the student. A teacher suggested:

'The honorific language is formal Korean language used in schools. This form of language has traditionally been used and still continues to be used in school. By using the language the students display respect for the teacher and for learning. The honorific language is interwoven in both written and spoken language which shapes the behaviour of the speaker. Although honorific language may not always be used in homes today among families, in schools this

form of language is used throughout formal education. The students are required to master the honorific language in the first years of schooling.'

9) I was curious about the way teachers discipline students when they misbehave. Q9.

What happens when a student misbehaves?

Unlike in western schools, the teacher explained that teachers are responsible for students' behaviour in the classroom. A teacher commented that:

'Until recently, the hitting of the hands or the bare calves was not unusual in the classroom, sometimes with a thick stick called a cane. It is in 2010 corporal punishment was officially banned from schools. There are various forms of punishment and it is dependent on teacher's choice but written apology, verbal reprimand and standing up facing the wall are common choice of punishment. If the student is uncontrollable or continues to misbehave the parents are called in to discuss matters further.'

Also, communication runs directly between the teacher and the student's parent. At the beginning of the school year, the teacher and parents meet to discuss the curriculum and exchange personal details and information. Both sides can easily contact one or the other. A teacher suggested that:

'Parents can contact me anytime if they have concerns for their child. This works the same for me. I can contact a parent regarding their child... We have a meeting at the beginning of the school year where the parents watch me teach a lesson and then after the lesson I introduce myself and my teaching philosophy during this meeting. This is also a time when parents can meet other parents. Parents can volunteer to help at the school with allocated jobs like at the crossing etc...'; 'Parents are very helpful and are always concerned for their child. They are willing to help in anyway'.

Results of follow-up questions to students.

I wanted to ask students about their reluctance to ask questions in class. Q1. Why didn't any of you ask questions in class?

Some of the students' comments were:

'I do not ask questions in class because I want to think about the taught lesson first'.

'I don't want to disrupt the class with my questions; if I need to I can ask the teacher during the break time'

'I do not want to show that I do not understand to my friends. That's embarrassing'.

11.9 Acknowledgement of limitation.

Classroom observation is a process in which the researcher sits in and records teaching practice and students' actions in class. Therefore, there is a likelihood of contamination of data because of the observer's presence. Apart from exchanges of courtesies and salutations, conversation was kept to a minimum throughout each observation. Furthermore, to decrease contamination of data due to the observer's presence, in each classroom observation only one observer was present at any one time. Another obvious and practical reason for such an arrangement is the limited space in the classroom. There was not always room to permit more than one additional desk and chair to be located unobtrusively, with freedom of movement. I acknowledge that two people

observing simultaneously in these classrooms could compare data collected for consistency.

11.10 Conclusion.

Chapters 9, 10 and 11 presented the details of construction of the instruments for each stage of data collection, followed by the results obtained from the focus groups, questionnaire and classroom observations and interviews respectively. The following chapter presents discussion and analysis which focus on interpreting the findings and outlining the implications. It also presents the significance of the findings based on literature reviewed in chapters 2-4.

In design, the methodology was carefully thought out, however in practice, the consecutive stages did not add much to the previous data collected. If I had the chance to do the research again, I would drop the interviews and use the available time to focus on improving the questionnaire and carrying out more observations. It would even be worth considering conducting the observations before conducting the focus group interviews and questionnaires.

-Part 5- Discussion

Chapter 12 - Discussion

Chapter 13 - Conclusion

Chapter 12: Discussion and analysis

12.0 Introduction.

The purpose of this study was to investigate primary state education in Korea, specifically the contribution of national culture, and historical and social aspects of pedagogy. In this chapter, the results are discussed and analysed in light of the three research questions that guided this study. The research questions are restated below:

1. Is there a common pedagogy in a sample of national primary schools in Seoul?
2. If so, what are its distinctive features?
3. How does the current social and cultural context of Korea influence the common pedagogy in primary state schools in Seoul?

A combination of both qualitative and quantitative mixed methods was incorporated sequentially, using a grounded theory approach. To begin the study, four teachers' and four students' focus group interviews were conducted to explore little known fields. The data generated from the focus group interviews were then used to inform and help develop both teachers' and students' questionnaires. Questionnaires were collected from 294 teachers and 302 students from nine schools in Seoul. Further, to check for consistency, eight classroom observations and follow up interviews were conducted based on results of the questionnaires.

12.1 First and second research questions.

The first section of this chapter discusses the first and second research questions stated above, incorporating the findings of this research from part four with relevant literature from part two of this study.

12.2 Contemporary education system.

The teachers in the focus group interviews (in Section 9.10.1) argued that the education system experienced frequent and top-down enforced changes. According to MEST (2009), each major change has been made in response to the changes in politics or the economy, and the effect of globalisation. According to Kim (2000), in response to the impact of globalisation and following world trends in other nations such as America, schools in Korea started to implement a policy of decentralisation in 1991. Further, the seventh national curriculum was implemented in the year 2000 (Kim, H; 2004), in order to reform all aspects and levels of education with the goal of creating a more flexible workforce. The latest changes were introduced to increase autonomy at the local school level, to create more creativity in the classroom, and to loosen the rigid, centralised framework of the country's education system. This was introduced to encourage more direct and active involvement of teachers in the decision and planning processes, and in particular how the curriculum was taught.

According to Kim (2000), decentralisation in the Korean education system had been successfully implemented because 80% of national schools had established school councils consisting of principals, teachers, parents, community leaders, alumni and

educational specialists. Kim and Ryu (2004) also supported this claim on the grounds that local school councils would allow and encourage greater autonomy at school level.

However, the data collected in this study suggests that the education system still contains characteristics of a highly centralised system, reminiscent of traditional schools, and has not fully adjusted to the changes introduced by the education legislation. This is not implying that the decentralisation policy has not been implemented. But it is questioning to what extent educational decentralisation has been achieved in Korea so far. The meaning, the content and the scope of the term, ‘education decentralization’ are subject to different interpretations. As such, decentralisation does not just imply autonomous administration of local educational authorities. The process also requires the delegation of powers and responsibilities to local governing bodies at different levels and, importantly, to individual schools and classrooms.

The teachers pointed out in the focus groups (in Section 9.11.4) that technology had permitted development of a better and potentially more creative teaching method, indicating successful implementation should increase creativity in the classroom. Yet the heavy workloads of teachers and a relentless focus on the curriculum by parents (in Section 9.10.1), continue to place huge constraints on any move to allow teachers greater autonomy. Teachers also indicated in the focus group interviews (in Section 9.10.1), that strict government regulations and guidelines left them little time to plan new, more imaginative ways of teaching the curriculum. Again, teachers in the focus group discussion (in Section 9.11.1) mentioned that textbooks were used as teaching tools which further restricted teaching methods. It is clear that teachers are still required to use

textbooks which are designed to follow the national curriculum in minute detail. The teachers' questionnaire results (in Table 10.4) confirmed that teachers' involvement in decision making at school level remained low. Only 6.1% of teachers indicated they had the authority to choose textbooks and only 28.5% of teachers indicated they had the authority to choose how their lessons were taught. The teachers in this study appeared to feel that they had very limited autonomy in their classrooms.

Although the government introduced legislation designed to reform how schools operate, pre-existing conditions in the education system prevented effective implementation of new approaches to teaching and learning. Schools remained dependent on government regulations, and control of textbooks and teaching materials. In addition, the test / exam system had not changed (this is further discussed in the next Section). These acted as constraints on teachers and their teaching approaches, limiting autonomy in the classrooms. It seems that the decentralisation policy in the Korean education system has been only partially implemented, and continues to be, a slow and ongoing, complex process. Whether more radical change is possible in the Korean education system remains questionable due to the local, especially the cultural, conditions. The findings in this study are consistent with Fuller and Clarke's (1994) and Watkins and Briggs' (2001) studies that illustrate the unsuccessful implementation of educational reform in Asian countries when they borrow educational policy without consideration to local conditions.

It appears that decentralisation and the seventh national curriculum changes have not yet fully reached the schools and classrooms. It follows that pedagogy in most

Korean classrooms is unlikely to change as long as the centralised nature of core aspects of the education system remains in place, notably the testing and examination systems, and the limited teacher autonomy over the curriculum.

12.3 Excessive testing.

The teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.11.2) claimed that approaches to pedagogy in Korean primary schools were focused on testing and were exam driven. This made it difficult for teachers to adopt different teaching approaches to the currently used methods. This view is supported by the findings from the teachers' questionnaire (in Table 10.5). A high 89.2% of teachers suggested that the pedagogy was focused on exams. When the need is to concentrate and focus on the output, it limits the teaching approaches. This finding supports Sorensen's (1994) contention that the education system is pervaded by an excessive focus on tests due to the competitive nature of the education system. The findings show that many aspects of the education system, mainly those focusing on the importance placed on tests and the final examination, place limits on teachers' freedom to adopt a more flexible and child-centred pedagogy.

12.4 Implementation of policy and policy borrowing.

It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the implementation process of Korean educational policies, or borrowing of policies from other countries. However, the teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.10.1) asserted that the centralised government system had enforced top-down implementation, (including, ironically, the

policy of decentralisation in schools,) without adequate consideration to current conditions. This is consistent with Fuller and Clarke's (1994), Nguyen's et al (2006) and Kwon's, (2002) studies. When the current cultural context in the country from which the policy is borrowed differs significantly from the current conditions in which the policy is implanted, results are likely to be unsuccessful due to differences in cultural conditions (refer to Section 12.2).

12.5 Religious impact.

According to Kim (2002), the religion of Buddhism, Taoism and Shamanism has had a profound impact on Korean values and beliefs, affecting human behaviour in society. However, the influence of these religions was not evident in the findings from this study. Confucianism, on the other hand has contributed not only to the Korean social and political principles, but its influence is clear in schools and in classrooms as well.

First, the findings show a Confucian style hierarchical relationship in the schools. The teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.10.1) indicated that the principal makes the final decision in the schools. Further, teachers in the focus group discussion (in Section 9.10.1) implied that the older and experienced teachers had the first choice of the class level to teach. This view is consistent with Lee's (2001) claim that status, based on rank, age and gender, reflects the hierarchical relation between the superiors and subordinates. However, although Lee's study illustrated little discourse between the staff and the school institutions, the findings in this study differed slightly. For example, a teacher commented in the focus group discussion (in Section 9.10.1) that

teachers' preferences are seriously taken into consideration. This suggests that some communication exists between the staff in Korean schools and the principal.

Second, teachers in the focus group discussion (in Section 9.10.2) suggested that the strong government control and the hierarchical society constrain changes that are made to the education system. As mentioned above, Kim (2000) claimed that decentralisation in the Korean education system had been successfully implemented because school councils had been established (refer to Section 12.2). However, a teacher in a focus group discussion (in Section 9.10.2) suggested that schools are still under government control because they regulate the evaluation of schools and the institutions' budget allocations. Again, a Confucian style hierarchical structure is illustrated which remains a distinctive influence on Korean pedagogy. The effect of Confucianism is further discussed below (in Section 12.12) in order to answer the third research question.

12.6 Teaching and learning approaches.

The findings suggest that Korean students are quiet, reluctant to ask questions, express opinions, and to be critical, yet they also show deeper and meaning oriented learning approaches, all of which help explain Biggs's (1987) and Murphy's (1987) studies, on student learning approaches in China and Hong Kong respectively.

The characteristics of Korean pedagogy identified in this study were effort and working hard. Teachers saw these attributes as helping to increase ability. They also regarded continual practice as an intertwined process of making mistakes, memorisation, understanding, and reflective learning. This is quite different to the stereotypical view of

rote learning in some western critiques of “Asian” pedagogy (e.g. Murphy, 1987). The research also identified interest in the subject and the idea of praise/encouragement as part of Korean pedagogy; these, too, were not identified in Western critiques of Chinese and Asian approaches to learning (Clarke et al, 2006; Kember, 1996; Biggs and Moore, 1996; Watkins, 1996). These are each discussed separately below.

12.6.1 Learning views.

First, for high level of educational accomplishment, students’ competences were believed to increase incrementally through hard work, effort and perseverance. For example, the teachers in the focus group interviews (in Section 9.12.6) suggested that motivation and hardworking attributes would increase students’ academic ability. Teachers also asserted that effort and students’ application to their work were important for achievement and success. Moreover, the student focus group discussion (in Section 9.14.2) presented similar views to the teachers. Students suggested that working hard and being an obedient student would help to produce good grades, to gain respect and to receive recognition from society. This determination and hard-working approach was demonstrated in the readiness and engagement of the students and their approach to learning. Students were on task, engaged throughout the observations with little or no disruption (in Table 11.8). The students were paying attention, listening and/or interacting with the teacher and actively involved in their work. The students were attentive and alert in response to the teacher. Even after each break, the students’ response was quick and attentive.

The effort that students put into their work and their hard-working approach to learning is also illustrated in the long hours they spent on academic work. Table 2.1 illustrated that the average South Korean school student (12 years old or younger) was involved in more hours during and after school compared to an average student in the US. To have a competitive edge, the students attended many afterschool private academic programmes which were believed to help and assist them to excel at their studies. For example, as indicated in Table 10.17, most children attended many extra lessons or private academies after school.

Hence, the teachers' and students' comments in the focus group discussion and the hard working nature observed in the class observations, indicated students' determination and reliance on their ethic of hard work as a learning approach. Thus, they believed that effort would increase their ability and would motivate them, leading to high achievement and success.

Second, the Korean characteristic of continual practice to facilitate learning was found to link memorising with understanding. For example, as identified in the focus group interviews (in Section 9.12.1), repetition was seen as a way of coming to an understanding. This finding was consistent with Watkins' (1996, 1998) and Marton's et al (1996) studies in Hong Kong. The teachers in the focus groups suggested that by practising in a repetitive manner, the learner develops the ability to execute a task. Moreover, repetitive practice is believed to deepen understanding by reinforcement of ideas. For example, the statement, made by a teacher in the focus group discussion (in Section 9.12.1) that 'practice makes perfect', further illustrates this point. In the focus

group interviews (in Section 9.12.4), teachers explained that learning started by the learner gaining competence; through repeated practice, gradual understanding would be achieved. In supporting this claim, the teachers' questionnaire results (in Table 10.6) showed that 71.9% of teachers believed that repetition was important for learning and 61.7% of teachers suggested that memorisation was an important agent of learning. Teachers believed that learning was a gradual process; thus, continuous practice and repetition were regarded as two intertwining processes in learning, resulting in deeper understanding. Systematic, repeated practice and memorising were seen to be an important part of the learning process in Korean pedagogy.

Moreover, findings show that skills preceded the exploration of ideas and that learning was a gradual process. For example, the teachers suggested in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.12.2), that students needed to build confidence by practising and building up understanding to make a solid knowledge base or theoretical foundation of general concepts before they could handle challenging situations. This repetition, continuous practice and memorisation in Korea could be seen as paralleling the ideas of Vygotsky, concerning the development of knowledge (discussed in Section 3.1.4). It was argued that meaning evolved and over time the meaning grew. It was built upon and then changed. By connecting the new knowledge to what had gone before, over time continued opportunities would increase the learners' depth of understanding, thus enabling them to construct meaning.

Thirdly, the evidence that teachers see Korean students as reflective learners is consistent with Cortazzi and Jin's (2001) argument that Chinese students are not passive

but reflective because they value thoughtful questions, which they ask after sound reflection. For example, the teachers in the focus groups (in Section 9.12.3) argued that students learn from making mistakes and are being reflective when they recognise the problem and relearn in a better way to avoid similar mistakes. The questionnaire results (in Table 10.6) also confirmed that 76.3% of teachers believed that students' learnt from their mistakes. Korean students' capacity for reflective thought is again shown in the follow up interview (in Section 11.8). The students showed that they did not question the teacher in class because they wanted to 'think about the taught lesson first', suggesting that learning was based on a reflective thinking process.

It is reasonable to conclude that Korean pedagogy resembles some of the studies based on 'Chinese' and 'Asian' learning approaches to motivation, memorisation, repetition and their hardworking nature (Kember, 1996; Biggs and Moore, 1996; Watkins, 1996). However, students' conscious interest in motivation for learning and discussion as features of their learning approach were seldom reported in the above-mentioned 'Chinese' and 'Asian' studies but were identified as important characteristics of Korean pedagogy in this study. The teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.12.5) believed that discussion based learning helped to develop students' ideas and increase students' interest in the subject being taught. This belief was confirmed in the teachers' questionnaire results (in Table 10.6), which showed 90.9% of teachers believed that student interest, and 76.9% discussion, were important as motivational constructs in helping the process of development and learning. Unfortunately, however, the classroom observations revealed little evidence of active class discussions taking place (illustrated in Table 11.8). Although, teachers believed that discussion and teaching to sustain

interest were motivational constructs, they were unable to facilitate these through their own teaching approaches. Perhaps this was because the current centralised condition of the education system and the requirements of the test and exam driven pedagogy made teachers reluctant to take the risk of introducing something new.

Further, teachers and students in this study illustrated mixed beliefs about praise and encouragement as motivation for learning. Wan and Salili's (1996) study claimed that students depended less on external rewards than students in western countries, as praise was seldom given and only for outstanding achievements. However, the student focus group discussion (in Section 9.14.3), showed that Korean students wanted more praise and encouragement from teachers to help motivate their learning. Also, the teachers' questionnaire results (in Table 10.6), showed that a little over half the teachers (55.6%) believed that praise and encouragement would help motivate student learning. But, in the observations (in Table 11.8), teachers were rarely seen to praise or encourage students in class. Perhaps, this was not because students depended less on external rewards – students themselves indicated that they wanted more praise (see above and in Section 9.14.3) – but, because Korean teachers expected students to do well. The teachers in the focus group discussion (in section 9.12.6) implied that teachers expected students to work hard and get good results. These are expected behaviours in students and therefore they usually do not expect or need to be praised and encouraged.

Hence, the identified characteristics of Korean pedagogy are effort and hard work. These attributes are believed to increase ability and encourage reflective learning. In addition, continual practice is believed to be an intertwined process of making mistakes,

memorisation and understanding. And, although, discussion for interest and the idea of praise/encouragement are believed by teachers to be part of Korean pedagogy, they were not facilitated in the class observations. It is, therefore, unclear whether they can be identified as characteristics of current Korean pedagogy.

12.6.2 Teacher / student centred teaching.

The findings suggest that the Korean learning environment is rigid and structured because the methods of instruction are textbook-bound and exam driven. For example, the teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.11.1) suggested that instruction was strictly based on the textbooks provided by a central agency, developed according to the national curriculum. The teachers' questionnaire results (illustrated in Table 10.5) also support this claim. For example, 94% of teachers identified textbooks and 93% of teachers identified teaching guidelines as constraints on instruction. Further, the teaching approach is typically whole class instruction, with activity based work centred on the teacher, with the students quietly focused on the task and following their teacher's instructions (illustrated in Table 11.8). From a western cultural perspective, these classroom features could stereotypically be labelled as teacher-centred. On the other hand, taken from an Asian perspective, features of positive student-centred learning are portrayed even though the teaching approaches are rigid and text-bound, because students are motivated and have accepted the responsibility for their own learning.

Korean pedagogy appears rigid and structured; nonetheless, students are frequently engaged in a sequence of learning activities involved in teacher-led whole

class activities. The approaches to learning are shown to be associated with gaining a deeper understanding of knowledge when building up basic concepts through repetitive practices. It is believed that, over time, ideas increase in depth and students develop understanding and learning. For example, the lessons were precise, structured and organised (illustrated in Section 11.7.1), and showed teachers frequently questioning the students while also explaining key concepts of the lesson (illustrated in Table 11.8). As such, the picture of Korean teaching approaches from this research is coherent. It includes guided instruction with stimulating and challenging questions as described by Stigler and Stevens (1991). The findings help explain Stigler and Stevens' description of Chinese instruction as 'constructivist' when teachers pose provocative questions in class. Similarly, Stevenson and Lee (1997) describe whole class structured teaching as providing maximal opportunities for the students to benefit from the teacher. For example, the observations (in Table 11.8) illustrated mostly teacher-led whole-class instruction, but nevertheless showed students benefiting from the teacher-led instruction and activities.

Therefore, the findings from this study question whether the dichotomies between student-centred and teacher-centred teaching are too extreme to capture the characteristics of the Korean classroom. According to Brandes and Ginnis (1986), there were six points to describe student centred learning (see Section 3.2.3 for full list). Two of these are addressed:

1. The learner has full responsibility for his/her learning,
2. Involvement and participation are necessary for learning.

In the Korean classroom, although, the teacher organises the lesson and controls classroom activities (illustrated in Table 11.8), the students are not passive but are alert and actively engaged in the learning process and are always prepared to work. Further, the teacher acknowledges student understanding and involvement as central to their learning experience. For example, the teachers' questionnaire results (in Table 10.6) showed that 90.8% of teachers believed that understanding was important in the learning process. This teaching and learning approach describes a mixture of both teacher and student-centred instruction and learning. Moreover, this finding helps explain Cortazzi and Jin's (2001) and Fuller and Clarke's (1994) argument that oppositional dichotomies offer false choices. If so, categorization of teaching approaches adopted by western researchers is not entirely relevant to the Korean context.

To summarise, the findings suggest that teaching and learning approaches in the Korean classroom are rigid and structured, yet coherent and guided, and include instruction with provocative questions to deepen understanding. Moreover, the students were alert and involved, taking responsibility in the learning process. Therefore, Korean pedagogy can be described as both teacher- and student-centred.

12.6.3 Korean cultural characteristics.

The findings in this study show distinctive Korean cultural characteristics in features of Korean pedagogy. According to Alexander (2000), approaches to pedagogy are deeply embedded in cultural traditions. For example, the lesson sample (in Section 11.7.1) showed a teaching approach that was fast paced, articulate and controlled. Teachers also

taught directly, clearly and without showing their feelings, containing their emotions while teaching. This view of the teacher helps explain Sung's (1992) argument that parents and other elders hold considerable authority and are to be treated with great respect by the children. The traditional form of parental authority is the role of the father as disciplinarian who is expected to control emotions, whether positive or negative. Teachers are viewed to be in the same linear line to the father. Section 12.14.3 discusses in more depth the teachers' limited use of praise and encouragement due to the effects of Korean cultural characteristics.

Further, the Korean cultural characteristics of *hyodo* and *chemyeon* are distinctive features of Korean pedagogy. For example, the observations (in Table 11.8) revealed few discipline problems. Moreover, the lesson sample (in Section 11.7.1) illustrated courteous student behaviour, with use of the formal honorific and respectful language throughout classroom observations. This supports Yang's (2008) argument that children behave properly because they are required to have *hyodo* so that the family *chemyeon* is upheld. For example, a comment from a teacher in a focus group interview (in Section 9.13.5) suggested that mothers are responsible for 'family education' and that the children are implicitly taught appropriate manners to reflect well on the family. Sections 12.14.6 and 12.14.7 explore *chemyeon* and *hyodo* further, and the effects of cultural characteristics on Korean pedagogy in more depth.

The findings illustrate the Korean cultural role of the teacher as an authority figure. The characteristics of *hyodo* and *chemyeon* exemplify their role, and can be seen as distinctive features of Korean pedagogy.

12.6.4 Korean language and Korean concept of ‘self’.

This study suggests that the usage of the honorific language in the classroom and also Korean society’s view of ‘self’ may be seen as distinctive features of Korean pedagogy. The way students conduct themselves when speaking or acting toward the teacher is shown through both non-verbal and verbal communication. First, the findings (in Section 11.7.1) show both teachers’ and students’ usage of formal honorific language in the classroom. This is consistent with Shin’s (2010) observation that students address and refer to the teacher in Korean honorific language. Students’ respectful behaviour toward the teacher when they enter the classroom is shown when students bow in respect and use honorific language in greeting the teacher (in Section 11.7.1). The use of the honorific language creates a very formal and polite social climate for both teachers and students, which in turn has a strong influence on pedagogy in Korean primary schools.

Moreover, the relation between the individual and the other, and how the ‘self’ is portrayed in Korean society, are important influences on Korean pedagogy. In the Korean language, there is a tendency to use words that may seem out of place to someone brought up in a western country. For example, ‘my teacher’ is described as *‘uri seonsaengnim’* meaning ‘our’ teacher (in Section 9.14.3) and also ‘my parents’ described as *‘uri bumyeonim’* meaning ‘our’ parent (in Section 9.14.2). The inclination to use certain words confirms Choi and Choi’s (1994) and Farver and Shin’s (1997) claim that Koreans tend to use the terms ‘we’ and ‘our’ as opposed to using ‘I’ or ‘my’ in verbal and written expression even though ‘I’ and ‘my’ might appear more suitable to a western observer. The use of ‘I’ and ‘my’ in the Korean culture is seen as individualistic in social

interactions and is interpreted as excluding the other person from the social context. The findings in this study reflected this interpretation when teachers talked about students as part of the family (in Section 9.13.4). By using the terms ‘we’, ‘our’ rather than ‘I’, teachers were seeing students as part of an extended family and thus were bridging the gap in relationship between themselves and the students.

The honorific language, and Korean concept of ‘self’, exemplify roles and positions in relation to the teacher and the family. As with the Korean cultural characteristic of *chemyeon* mentioned above (in Section 12.6.3), the honorific language and the way a person is viewed in relation to others, exemplify and clearly define teachers’ role in society. As such, Korean language is distinctively a part of Korean pedagogy.

12.6.5 Summary.

In order to answer the first and second research questions in this section, characteristics of Korean pedagogy were identified from the study, and compared and discussed in light of relevant literature.

12.7 The third research question.

The following section, shows how the research has helped to answer the third research question. The third research question states;

3. How does the current social and cultural context of Korea influence the common pedagogy in primary state schools in Seoul?

In answering the third research question, we start with discussion of the macro environment in which the educational system and the classroom learning environment are located. The second part discusses the teaching and learning approaches in the Korean classroom and the effects of Korean socio-cultural characteristics, in both cases in relation to relevant literature.

12.8 Effect of historical and post war redevelopment.

The findings show similarity in design of the buildings. The equal sized rooms and the layout of the classrooms observed (in Section 11.6) are the result of the great expansion and redevelopment of education facilities after the Korean war (1945-1953). According to KERIS (2006), the current education system was created post-war, which created similarity in each school and classroom environment. The centralised education system, first established to create equal opportunities, is a consequence of the suppression and limited educational opportunities (Sorenson, 1994) during the Japanese occupancy (1910-45).

A consequence of the centralised curriculum and established classroom design has been to create a rather rigid and inflexible type of pedagogy. Hence, the findings from this study suggest that the historical background to the education system played a part in contributing to the current pedagogy in the Korean classrooms. The pedagogy observed in the research may be seen as a consequence, in part, of historical and post war redevelopment.

12.9 Excessive testing.

The main aim of Korean education is working towards the final CSAT examination (Collage Scholastic Ability Test), which determines university placement (illustrated in Section 9.11.2). There are similar tests in other countries for example, GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in the United Kingdom and SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) in the United States of America. However, the teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.13.2) recognised very clearly that the type of university and occupation were linked to certain prestige and status in Korea. The teachers' questionnaire (in Table 10.7), also showed that 89.9% of teachers claimed that university placement reflected economic status. The findings are consistent with Lee and Brinton's (1996), and Lee and Larson's (2000) claims that the university the student attends introduces him or her to future employers and that graduating from a highly ranked university is the key to obtaining a good job, impressive salary, high social status, and even entering into a good marriage.

Moreover, the teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.13.2) suggest that Korean society places high importance on successful outcomes in exams because educational attainment measures a person's value. The teachers' questionnaire results (in Table 10.7) support this claim: 88.9% teachers regarded a student with high grades as a competent student and 80.4% of teachers suggested that level of education upholds family status. As Seth (2005) argued, the examination system is a means of social selection, a way of achieving social status, power, and entry to high government office. It demonstrates membership of the cultivated upper class. As a result, the Korean

education system is very competitive. Hence, the findings suggest that the main aim of Korean pedagogy – for parents, students and teachers – is working towards the final examination. The present research, however, goes one step further by showing that primary school pedagogy does not just reflect this social selection; it also maintains and reinforces it. The Korean pedagogy develops in students the motivation to gain high grades in order to gain placement into a prestige university, paving the way to economic and social benefits.

The findings indicate that this view is developed in the primary school years. Hence, Korean primary school pedagogy is not only affected by the high value that Korean society has traditionally placed on education, but also plays a major part in maintaining it.

12.10 Contemporary changes in society.

Kim-Renaud (1992) suggested that students' behaviour had recently become more disruptive due to the changes in social structure and the influx of western culture. Also, there have been increasing reports in the media of middle and high school students' lack of respect for teachers and increasing misconduct in the classrooms. As a result, Kim (2003) suggested that learning no longer took place as effectively as it had done previously in most current Korean classrooms. She examined the teaching and learning process and reported that the level of student interest and enthusiasm for learning and students' attention, and involvement in classroom activities were low. Further, these reports claimed that the student disruptive behaviour were found in both primary and

secondary school classrooms. They did not, however, provide supportive evidence at the primary school level.

Despite Kim's (2003) and Kim-Renaud's (1992) reports of disruptive behaviour and a teacher's comment in a follow up interview (in Section 11.8), the observations of the primary school classrooms in this study (in Section 11.7.1 and in Table 11.8) showed well behaved students using formal honorific language in a courteous classroom manner. I acknowledge that the students' well-mannered behaviour may have been due to the effect of researcher's presence at the time of study. Nevertheless, in most cases the researcher was not the only visitor to the classrooms (mentioned in Section 13.3). And, perhaps, people from different backgrounds may have different ways of interpreting the world and the events that happen within it. In other words, people explain happenings according to their own perspective and experience. In this study, the teachers and I may not have agreed on the meaning and level of bad or good student behaviour, and this could have resulted in a difference of perspectives. Moreover, studies of primary school children's behaviour in Korea are limited. The existing reports of change in behaviour are mainly based on older students in higher years, for example, Kim's (2003) study. Therefore, further research is needed on levels of disruptive behaviour in Korean primary schools.

Nonetheless, Korea has undergone economic development and according to Inglehart and Baker (2000), this is linked to cultural change in society. However, this study shows the persistence of traditional cultural practices in the usage of honorific language and dutiful behaviour in the classrooms. On the present evidence, the changed

behaviour seen in older students in the Korean education system is not yet visible in the primary classroom. This finding illustrates Hyun's (2010) claim that traditional values persist even with the exposure to western practices. Again, this study goes further by showing the role that pedagogy plays in maintaining these traditional values in the primary school classrooms.

To summarise, the findings suggest that teachers and students in Korean primary schools are maintaining many of the traditional values of society even though economic development is leading to dramatic changes in the wider society. Thus, traditional cultural values of society are distinctively a part of and affect pedagogy in the primary school classrooms.

12.11 Implementation of policies and practices- Policy borrowing.

To examine the implementation process of Korean educational policies, or borrowing of policies from other countries, is beyond the scope of this study, as mentioned above (in Section 12.4). However, according to Kim's (2004) and KEDI's (1998) report, the policy of decentralisation in the Korean education system aimed to give more autonomy to teachers and schools, on a similar model to the American school system, and to redistribute authority and responsibility for a more creative environment. The teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.11.4) reported that technology was successfully being incorporated into teachers' planning and lesson delivery, but their involvement in decision making (illustrated in Table 10.4) remained limited due, in

particular, to strong government control and the hierarchical nature of Korean society (refer to Section 12.2). Hence, the data suggest that the cultural characteristics of Korean society have helped to maintain aspects of primary school pedagogy, and to resist pressures to reform.

12.12 Religious impact: Confucianism.

The findings did not show any effects of Buddhism and Shamanism on Korean pedagogy (refer to Section 12.5). Confucianism on the other hand, has had an impact on the school system, and also on teachers' and students' behaviour in the classrooms. This operates in four ways.

First, the findings indicate that students spend a large amount of time on their studies. For example, the teachers in the focus group discussions commented (in Section 9.12.6 and 9.13.3) that students spend a large amount of time devoted to learning how to improve their grades and to become more competent. The extra hours students spend on academic afterschool programmes are illustrated in Table 10.17. This evidence of students' commitment to learning supports Seth's (2005) claim that a key Confucian principle is to devote enormous time to learning, and that a person is perfectible through education.

Second, the teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.13.2) indicate that the opportunities for social advancement and entry to the privileged class are obtained by placement in a prestige university. The teachers' questionnaire results (in Table 10.7) showed that 89.9% of teachers believed that university placement reflected

the economic status of a person. The students in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.14.2) also corroborated this belief and the students' questionnaire results (in Table 10.15) supported the claim: 76.5% of students were motivated to learn in order to earn placement into a university. These views support Lee's (1984) portrayal of the Korean traditional *yangban* class, in which high social status is earned by passing the civil examination, the most desirable path to success. The *yangban* obtained their power and status by following the Confucian doctrine of self improvement through study and self-cultivation, and devoted themselves wholly to study of classics.

Third, traditional Confucian values have had an impact on the family as well. The teachers in the focus group discussion (in Section 9.13.5) suggested that families, especially parents, not only provide financial support but, they also pay close attention to their child's educational needs. Kim-Renaud (1991) argued that elite families provided financial support throughout the long duration of preparation for the national civil examination. The main Confucian moral obligation of parents was to provide for their child's wellbeing. The teachers (in Section 9.13.5) mentioned that parents were so concerned for their child's economic status and wellbeing that children were sent overseas to be educated as young as the elementary school level. Some, even moved schools (sometimes moving to a different suburb) so that the child could benefit from a better learning environment.

Fourth, Confucian values affect teachers' pedagogy. For example, the teachers suggested (in Section 9.10.1) that the restrictions placed on them were due to the hierarchical nature of the education system. This is consistent with Lee's (2001)

argument that the hierarchical nature of schools and classrooms, and the top-down approach of the education system, impose restrictions on the teacher, limiting their autonomy in deciding how to teach. In another comment, a teacher suggested (in Section 9.11.1) that the government-issued textbooks and teaching guidelines imposed restrictions on teachers' teaching approaches. Similarly, the Confucian order of human relationships restricts behaviour based on age and rank, which in turn shapes the structural hierarchical pattern in the education system. The teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.10.1) suggested that Korean social structure is reflected in the schools and that the senior teachers were given priority in choice of age group. Section 12.6.3 discusses the hierarchical Confucian order and the restrictions that are placed on the behaviour of students in more detail. The structure of Korean language, and the effects of Confucian values on the learning approaches, are discussed further in sections 12.14.1 and 12.14.2 respectively.

To summarize, the findings suggest that Confucian values have not only affected the school system but also exert a powerful influence on pedagogy in primary schools.

12.13 Asian Learning styles.

This study suggests that Korean pedagogy should be interpreted from the perspective of socio-cultural contextual factors rather than based on western stereotypical understanding. In addition, Korean teaching and learning approaches should not be theorized as either 'Chinese' or 'Japanese' or even 'Asian', merely because of Confucian based cultural similarities. The obvious reason is that they are different countries.

According to Cummings (1996), not only are there differences in culture, but the historical makeup and even the languages differ in these countries. Therefore, while answering the third research question, the following section highlights the characteristics of Korean teaching and learning approaches and the effect of Korean socio-cultural characteristics in comparison to ‘western’ and other ‘Asian’ literature.

12.13.1 Building of knowledge.

Kember and Gow’s (1990) study showed evidence that teachers value lessons that are presented thoroughly and systematically, in order to help students build strong basic concepts. A structured teaching and learning approach is believed to help in understanding and to promote learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), knowledge develops and meaning evolves when you build upon existing knowledge. By connecting new knowledge to what had been learnt previously, meaning develops and the depth of understanding increases (discussed in Section 12.6.1).

This systematic learning is not unrelated to the traditional teaching approach of the *yangban* class. According to Kennedy (2002), students were required to learn vast amounts of Chinese characters and their meanings in a very structured manner. The learning began with the very basic characters, which developed into short passages of simplified Chinese literature and then gradually increased in difficulty. In order for the students to advance to the next level they had to have knowledge and understanding of each stage.

Both, teachers and children in this study believed that a systematic teaching approach assisted student learning. For example, the observations (in Section 11.7.1) indicated the lessons were organised, and the start and end of each lesson was precise. Teachers in the focus group discussion (in Section 9.12.2) suggested that a structured and systematic teaching approach implied building upon basic ideas and knowledge processes. The students in the focus groups (in Section 9.14.3) also believed that lessons that were clearly demonstrated with an unambiguous lesson aim, helped students with their learning and understanding. Therefore, it appears that the pedagogy in Korean primary schools maintains the traditional belief that learning develops and deepens when built firmly on existing knowledge.

12.13.2 Developing understanding.

As previously mentioned (in Section 12.6.1), teachers characterised learning as an intertwined process of repetitive practice and understanding, a central feature of Korean pedagogy. The finding is consistent with Marton's et al (1996) and Watkins' (1996) suggestion that learning is characterised by memorisation and understanding. They argued, 'the best way to acquire knowledge is to memorise it and the best way to acquire a skill is to practice it repeatedly'. It was suggested by a teacher in the focus group interviews (in Section 9.12.1) that repetition and practice consolidate learning. At the same time, a teacher (in Section 9.12.2) also suggested that memorising helps develop and reinforce understanding. These views reflect the traditional classrooms. According to Lee (1996), repetition and continual practice, and memorising in the traditional sense are believed to contribute to a higher-level learning outcome. Traditionally, continual

practice is believed to create a deep impression in the mind and in the process, the individual discovers new meaning. Thus, repetition and memorization are placed alongside reflecting and understanding as basic components of learning.

The data from this study also helped to explain why repetitive practice should not be seen as mere rote learning. Repetition provides opportunities to practice and examine the content in new ways, thus enhancing and deepening understanding through variety of activities. For example, a teacher (in Section 9.12.2) suggested that through continuous practice and feedback, the child gradually gains understanding. This describes the systematic teaching approach in a typical lesson sample (described in Table 11.9). The lesson started with a recollection of the previous lesson, and the teacher setting the objectives for the current lesson. The teacher then explained and discussed the main topic and also questioned the students to reinforce and to check student understanding. Further, a video or visual presentation demonstrated the content of the lesson, while the teacher included verbal explanation in between to point out important facts. The lesson continued with an activity or worksheet, and then concluded with a summary and reference to the answers in the workbook. In this lesson sample, the content of the topic was repeatedly practised and demonstrated, involving explanation, with questioning, and practice to help clarify, develop and deepen student understanding. The idea was to allow students to grasp the topic, reinforce understanding and also to create a deep impression in the minds of the students.

The afterschool academic programmes also increase opportunities to practise new skills and deepen student understanding. The students in this study attended many

afterschool programmes (illustrated in Table 10.17). The afterschool academic programmes offer the opportunity for the students to pre-learn school topics. According to a teacher in the focus group interviews (in Section 9.12.1), many student pre-learn a selection of school subjects before coming to the classroom. When the students are re-taught in schools, this offers a variation to the lesson taught in the afterschool programme. Also, re-learning in the school is believed to deepen the pupils' understanding. This involves students continually examining the content intended to reinforce understanding. A teacher in a focus group interview (in Section 9.12.2) argued that parents supported the afterschool programmes and believed that pre-learning a subject would deepen understanding when the topic was taught again in the school classroom. Another teacher in the follow up interview (in Section 11.8) confirmed this, suggesting that continuous practice emphasized the meaning and helped students understand in order to learn. These teachers believed that repetition would emphasize the meaning and leave a strong impression in the mind; this would help students to understand and learn. Hence, repetition and memorising contribute to higher level learning outcomes and are also seen as a precursor to deeper understanding.

Thus, the findings suggest that traditional cultural beliefs – that varied and continual practice develop and deepen understanding and learning – are powerfully reinforced in the pedagogy of the primary classroom.

12.13.3 Reflective thinking.

Information from students and teachers was consistent in showing a quiet Korean classroom with limited student questioning. As reviewed by Ballard (1989), Chinese student learning style is argued to be passive: ‘...diligent, obedient, hardworking, passive and assessment centred...’ (p. 41). Superficially, the findings in this study suggest that Korean students show similar characteristics (see Section 12.6.1). However, this study also suggests that Korean students are attentive, engaged and actively on task. According to Chuah’s (2010) study, learning strategies for Asian students differ from those for students in Western countries, with the former showing more reflective thinking before spontaneous questioning. For example, students did not ask questions in the classroom observations (in Table 11.8). Further, Korean students were reluctant to disrupt the class with their questions before they understood the lesson. For example, students in a follow-up interview (in Section 11.8) suggested that they wanted to think about the lesson before asking questions, implying they were being reflective. This supports Cortazzi and Jin’s (1996) argument that students learn by listening in order to fully absorb and understand before making assumptions and being critical.

While early socialisation may discourage children from challenging authority figures, it is powerfully reinforced in the pedagogy of the primary classroom. For example, in a follow up interview (in Section 11.8), another student commented that they didn’t want to disrupt the class with questions in class. Here, too, the data show how pedagogy reinforces these tendencies. Condon (1984), too, argued that Asian students show greater reflection compared to American students who are encouraged from an

early age to be analytical, critical and verbal. Nelson (1995) suggested that the Asian students wanted time to arrive at the correct answer and were uncomfortable when making guesses.

The Korean learning approach, then, is based on Confucian values. It was Confucius who saw learning as a process of observation of subject matter followed by reflection. According to Kim (2003), Confucius' views of learning emphasize reflective thinking, and reflection on the components of knowledge, in order to integrate them into oneself as wisdom. Further, reflection on oneself ensures that integration proceeds in an open-minded and autonomous way, and that the integrated knowledge is internalised to become part of oneself. Thus, Korean pedagogy reflects the traditional Confucian approaches to learning. However, on the evidence from this research, there do not appear to be distinctive features about the application of Confucian thinking in Korea compared with other Confucian Heritage cultures such as China, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore.

12.13.4 Effort and hard work.

The findings in this study show that both teachers and students held strong beliefs about the importance of effort (see Section 12.6.1). Students (in Section 9.14.2) and teachers (in Section 9.12.6) believed that hard work, perseverance and efficiency would increase ability and lead to success. These views support Hess and Azuma's (1991) and Stevenson et al's (1986) claims that Chinese students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort. Also, Holloway et al (1986) noted that Japanese children refer to lack of effort to explain low performance.

The findings further suggest that understanding is a lengthy process that requires extensive personal effort. For example, the teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.12.2) proposed that through continuous practice the child eventually gains understanding. Another teacher (in Section 9.12.2) illustrated that learning is a systematic process involving different stages. This indicates that learning and understanding is a gradual process that requires devotion and systematic steps. The child's basic foundation is their existing knowledge and they build on it when progressing to the next level while developing deeper understanding.

Thus, effort and application were considered important features for achievement and success. Being successful is being a diligent student and working hard enables the student to become more competent and, thus, increase their understanding. Both teachers and children regarded belief in the importance of effort, the most pervasive belief in Korean culture, as the major avenue for improvement and accomplishment. The famous Korean traditional saying illustrates the commitment to this value:

'If you sleep three hours, you succeed, if you sleep four hours you fail' (Park, 2009).

The above saying suggests that the more material a student covers, the higher their chances are of achieving and succeeding and, eventually, earning one of the limited places in the most prestigious universities. From a young age, students recognise that entry into the most prestigious universities opens doors to the most highly esteemed jobs (refer to Section 12.13.5). Children in the focus groups (in Section 9.14.2) recognised the competitive nature of the current education system and the fierce competition for entry

into universities. These students understood that they were expected to study increasingly long hours to pass exams, in order to enjoy the respect and privileges of the highest class..

The findings show that Korean pedagogy is based on the traditional belief that learning and understanding is a long process that requires considerable mental effort, and, is more important for success than ability. More importantly, Korean pedagogy is affected by the competitive nature of the education system and the value that society places on learning and success.

12.13.5 Achievement status.

The findings show that education is not only for knowledge advancement, but also determines the worth of a person. The students' focus group (in Section 9.14) discussed the importance of education for knowledge advancement. They recognised, too, that education provides information to help them function properly in society. Li (2001, 2002) argued that Chinese students' view of learning is acquiring relevant knowledge in order to help them function in society. Further, Stigler and Smith (1985) suggested that Asian children showed a strong interest in rising above their current level of competence. The present findings throw further light on this by suggesting that Korean students placed more importance on the value of education as a route to success in life. For example, students in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.14.2) argued that a person's level of education could help increase his or her status and power. This finding supports Lee and

Brinton's (1996) study showing the recruitment rate of Korean graduates from top universities into top firms and enjoying a large number of benefits.

Graduates from high ranking universities are guaranteed a high status job, and the rank of their university determines their status and perceived worth in society. This was clearly understood by children as well as by teachers in the focus groups, with implicit recognition that education was the most effective route for social mobility and recognition. A high percentage of students in the students' questionnaire (in Table 10.15) confirmed that learning was not only for knowledge advancement (85.1%) but also for university placement (76.5%) and job prosperity (66.9%).

The findings suggest that Korean pedagogy is affected by the cultural values of society and the belief that educational attainment predominantly determines the self-worth of a person. Thus, education and learning is the image and reflection of Korean society.

12.14 The Asian classroom.

Stevenson and Stigler (1992) suggest that whole class teaching is identified from a western perspective as 'lecturing'. The sample of lesson findings (in Section 11.7.1) in this study portray the Korean classroom as whole class teaching, but although the findings indicate that the teachers were 'lecturing', they were also guiding and probing. According to Stigler and Hiebert (1999), teaching styles vary in different cultures and contexts, and Alexander (2000) claimed that the meaning of teaching varies between each

culture. Therefore, whole class structured teaching in Korean classrooms should not be identified as only ‘lecturing’ because it is understood differently in other cultures.

To understand the Korean classroom, there is a need to comprehend teachers’ understanding of teaching and learning approaches. The observation of the lesson sample (in Table 11.9) showed structured lessons consisting of a sequence of learning activities involving teacher-led whole class instruction, including a combination of group work and individual learning activities. Also, interaction in these classrooms consisted of direct teaching and questioning, which does not necessarily mean that the students were learning passively. The teacher-led questioning may differ from the discussion or dialogue used in the western classrooms. Nevertheless, the Korean teachers spent a large amount of time interacting with the students and explaining key elements of the lesson, using computer-aided presentation and activity with provocative questions (see Table 11.8). The findings from the study help to support Mok and Ko’s (2000) conclusion that whole class instruction is structured and guided, but also gives maximum opportunities for the class to benefit from the teacher (refer to Section 12.7.2 for discussion on characteristics of teacher- and student-centred Korean pedagogy).

12.14.1 Korean honorific terms contribute to implicitly rigid pedagogy.

Honorific features of Korean pedagogy were also addressed (in Section 12.6.4). The students in the observations (in Section 11.7.1) used Korean honorific language when speaking to the teachers in class. This created an authoritative environment where student behaviour seemed at first sight submissive, as suggested in Shin’s (2010) study. The

honorific language accentuated and reflected teachers' high status and emphasized the students' position in relation to the teacher.

By using the Korean honorific language, a person is constantly aware of his or her place in relation to the other in any given situation. Byon's (2006) study showed that teachers' use of a directive structure when teaching and interacting with the students in class is associated with their sense of duty and authority. For example, when students greeted the teacher, they used the word *seonsaeng-nim* (respected teacher). The *-nim* is the affix to make the word *seonsaeng* (teacher) formal. The added use of a honorific term created an environment of reverence, an invisible boundary between the teacher and student which accentuated the rigidity of the classroom environment. The Korean honorific language structure contributed to affect how teachers and students behaved, notably the inflexible and controlled behaviour. Moreover, this study, goes one step further by showing that Korean honorific language structure helped students learning by establishing ground rules of behaviour. The honorific language helps maintain their respectful position as a student and encourages them to behave accordingly.

12.14.2 Language emphasizes cultural roles and responsibility.

As discussed above, the use of Korean, specifically the honorific language, emphasized the authority of the adult. It is the socio-cultural values embedded in the honorific language that define and maintain appropriate social relationship between the child and adult. In other words, human relationships are linguistically coded in Korean culture. In Shin's (2010) study, spoken language switched from English to Korean to

express respect and deference to an older person. Similarly, in this study, a teacher in a follow up interview (in Section 11.8), emphasized that students ‘used honorific language to display respect for the teacher and for learning’. According to Sohn (2006), the power variables are largely dependent upon factors as social status, gender, age, familiarity and ascribed status. Thus, Korean honorific language defines his or her place in relation to others in a given situation.

Yoon’s (1996) study illustrates the limitation of the Korean language by presenting evidence that bilingual adults use more Korean language with out-group members, (referring to acquaintances that are not considered to be close friends) but more frequently use English with in-group members (referring to friends). The more distant the conversation partners are, the more they use Korean language during conversation. The present research throws some light on this issue, relating to the constraints that the honorific language places on Korean pedagogy.

The limited student questioning and lack of class discussion shown in the observations in this study (see Table 11.8), illustrate the potentially negative effect of the Korean language. As the Korean honorific language creates specific roles and responsibilities for the teacher and children, this in turn restrict the choices of the individual, with the effect of limiting student questioning and class discussion. Further, it prevents teachers from showing emotion toward the students, thus limiting praise and encouragement (see Table 11.8). The honorific language is based on distinctions in social status. It thus interprets issues in terms of social status, and conveys a greater sense of solidarity with social peers. Consequently, it is hard for students to feel free to explore

other identities outside the traditional cultural norms and outside the basis on which they have built their social identities.

Clearly, when Korean language is used in the classroom, specifically the honorific language and the way certain words are used, it is likely to influence teachers and students in different ways. This is because the Korean language encourages people to think habitually. It imposes powerful social pressure to be attentive to certain details and to certain aspects of experience that speakers of other languages may not be required to think about.

Thus, using the honorific language acts as a powerful inducement to students to behave respectfully in front of the respected teacher. And since such habits of speech are cultivated from the earliest age, it is only natural that they can settle into habits of mind that go beyond language itself, affecting a child's – or teacher's – experiences, perceptions, associations, feelings, memories and orientation in the world. The use of the honorific language and the inclination to use certain words that may not be proper in other cultures (for example, English speaking cultures), is a strong and constant encouragement to think and act accordingly.

Therefore, the findings in this study suggest that the use of the honorific language in the classroom not only reflects the culture but also contributes to the socialisation of the individual through pedagogy in the primary classroom. Hence, Korean primary school pedagogy is not only affected by the high value that Korean society has traditionally placed on correct behaviour, but also plays a major part in maintaining it.

The above argument showed that honorific language placed limits, and restricted students' and teachers' behaviour according to the traditional distinctions in social status. At first sight, this does not seem to corroborate the discussion in section 12.14 that claimed the stereotypical description of Asian (or Korean) pedagogy wrongfully described whole-class, teacher led instructions as only 'lecturing'. As I have stated above (in Section 12.6.2), Korean classroom is both teacher- and student-centred. And, although Korean honorific language reinforces behaviour based on distinctions in specific roles and responsibility that society has created, Korean teachers have gone a long way towards overcoming the effect of the social barrier created by the language. They succeed in achieving a large amount of interaction with the students using structured and guided instructions and direct questioning (in Section 12.14).

12.14.3 Cultural values and social status create roles.

It is shown above that the Korean honorific language affects the way people behave according to the position of the person in relation to others in society. Moreover, the cultural values and social status placed on these roles also establish and reflect certain behaviours. In this study, teachers in the sample lesson (in Section 11.7.1) used an organised, straightforward and structured teaching approach. According to Sorenson (1994), it is believed that knowledge and truth is imparted by the teacher. Further, teachers are expected to control their emotions if they are to continue to be seen as authority figures who should be treated with respect (mentioned in Section 12.6.3). This forces students to look up to teachers and treat them with high esteem. For example, students in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.14.3) claimed that Korean teachers

seldom praised them. The role of the teachers is to control their emotions to show they have authority and power in the classroom. This study goes further by suggesting that the role that society has placed on teachers constrains their behaviour, and has an impact on the pedagogies they are able to use. It restricts the teacher's ability to express their feelings openly. One consequence of this is the limited use by teachers of praise and encouragement.

Moreover, although a teacher from the follow up discussions (in Section 11.8) suggested that students' disruptive behaviour in the classroom had increased due to changes in society this study found that Korean students were remarkably well mannered (see discussion in Section 12.10) . For example, the observations showed (in Table 11.8) that teachers needed little time to settle the class down for a forty minute lesson. This suggests that the cultural values of society influence students to behave well and act in accordance to the cultural roles and responsibilities that society has established for students and the strict, authoritarian – or authoritative – role that the society has created for teachers (mentioned in Section 12.6.3). Thus, Korean primary school pedagogy is not only affected by cultural values that place powerful pressure on individuals to behave according to social norms but plays a major part in maintaining it.

12.14.4 Korean sense of 'self' limits classroom interaction.

According to Sohn's (2006) observation, Korean is often called a discourse oriented language. Most often, the contextual elements in a sentence or speech are understood and left unexpressed. During the observation study, I was invited to join the lunch line ahead

of the students to eat first: ‘mon yu desae yo’: translated as ‘eat first’ (in Section 11.7.1). The unexpressed subject of ‘you’ reflects the characteristic features of the Korean culture where politeness between people is highly valued. The finding illustrates Kim’s (2009) argument that frequently, the subject ‘you’ does not appear in conversation and shows differences of usage in interpersonal aspects of discourse.

The Korean language itself avoids confrontational and argumentative behaviour. According to Holtgraves (1997), Korean people are motivated to collectively manage the “face” of each other by phrasing their remarks politely. He commented in his study about the indirect nature of Korean culture. Harmonious relationships are valued; communications between people are not confrontational and there is a tendency to talk around an issue. Again, the present research goes one step further by showing the role of primary school pedagogy in maintaining social harmony in the classroom. From this perspective, confrontational questioning and discussions are avoided to maintain harmony in class as well as to show respect for the teacher. It is hard for a student to express his or her views freely as the language assumes polite and humble behaviour to avoid confrontational situations. This places limits on students’ expression of their opinions, and particularly of views that may be negative and in conflict with teachers’ or friends’ perspectives.

The tendency to leave out words that are confrontational, as well as words that are individualistic, affects students by encouraging behaviour in accordance with their cultural roles and responsibilities.

12.14.5 Nunchi and Cheong.

Cheong refers to a strong bond of ‘we-ness’. It is a kind of relationship, connection, self-sacrifice, and an affectionate bond with people, object and place (Choi, 1988). *Cheong* is similar in line with *nunchi*. Yi et al (2000) argue that the concept of ‘*nunchi*’ is an attempt to know and be sensitive to other people’s feelings, and to maintain harmonious shared experience. For example, in the follow up interviews (in Section 11.8), the students were asked why they did not participate in the classroom, for example by questioning the teacher. The students gave three different reasons. First, they wanted to be reflective. Second, they felt they had no right to disrupt the class with personal questions and were being sensitive to other students’ feelings by having ‘*nunchi*’. Third, they did not want to show lack of understanding. The second comment implied that individual needs are suppressed by reflection on the cultural bond of *cheong*. For the sake of harmonious relationships in the classroom, verbal expression of his or her views was contained. Being argumentative and expressing opposing views is also being disrespectful. Thus, Korean cultural characteristics of *nunchi* cause people to be sensitive to other peoples’ feelings and *cheong* suppresses expression of individual needs. As such, Korean primary school pedagogy is affected by the Korean cultural values that society has traditionally placed on society to maintain harmonious relationships.

12.14.6 Chemyeon.

Chemyeon is another Korean cultural characteristic that influences people’s behaviour. The students avoided face to face interaction regardless of whether they agreed or not because they believed that expressing disagreement involved a high risk of

losing *chemyeon*. For example, one of the reason given by a student in a follow up interview (in Section 11.8) for not asking questions, was they didn't want to show lack of understanding because 'it's embarrassing'. The student also indicated in the follow up discussion that they preferred to question the teacher during their own free time or during break, out of respect for their fellow students. This finding supports Back's (2010) and Choi's, et al (1997) study which showed that students' passive and indirect behaviour in the classroom are due to maintaining *chemyeon*.

According to Goffman (2005), 'face is a self-delineated image in terms of approved social attributes' (p. 5). For example, students' well behaved manner in the class observations (Section 11.7.1) helped to preserve harmony in the classroom because unreasonable actions and unfulfilled obligations brought a sense of shame, or loss of *chemyeon*. *Chemyeon* is preserved when people's behaviour complies with others' expectations.

Hence, the infrequent questions and the passive behaviour seen in the classroom did not mean a lack of questioning skills or absence of curiosity. The students not only wanted to reflect on what the teacher was teaching them (discussed in Section 12.13.3) but to create harmony and maintain their *chemyeon*. This places powerful pressure on the teacher and on students to behave in the expected way in social situations.

In addition, social expectations reflect two interlocking principles: first to uphold family *chemyon* and, second, to have *hyodo*, defined as Korean filial piety towards one's parents. *Hyodo* is discussed in more depth in the next section. Successful achievement is seen as fulfilling one's filial obligations (*hyodo*) and also upholding the family *chemyeon*.

For example, a student in a focus group discussion (in Section 9.14.2), mentioned the recognition that the student would earn from society if they did well and that their academic success was an important determinant of pride for the family, and that academic failure would bring disgrace to the family. This view adds weight to Lee's (2001) argument that education is a means for success in life; it upholds family *chemyeon* and academic failure is a stigma on the family.

The students recognised that the level of education and the type of occupation reflect on, and bring status to, not only oneself but also one's family. Supporting this belief, teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.13.2) suggested that personal achievement upholds the family's status. This view was supported by 80.4% of teachers in the teachers' questionnaire results (in Table 10.7). The finding emphasized students taking more personal responsibility for their success and failure, as a duty towards their parents and family and strengthens Stigler and Smith's (1985) evidence that the academic success of the child was an important source of pride for the entire family.

Moreover, intelligence is respected both by the teacher and by peers, as shown in a comment in a student focus group: 'students with high grades are looked up to by friends and admired by the teacher... they are respected' (in Section 9.14.2). Social status increases when one gets admitted to a university, particularly admission to a top ranking, well known prestigious university. For example, a student said in a focus group: 'they will be recognised in society only if they enter university'.

Thus, feeling that one has behaved honourably and properly is a critical component in experiencing *chemyeon*. *Chemyeon* does not merely indicate an individual's social role

and position, but also an individual's prestige, dignity, honour and reputation, on behalf of the family and oneself. Thus, *chemyeon* motivates students to behave according to social expectations, further motivating student in the learning process and inducing the desire for high achievement. The Korean cultural characteristic of *chemyeon* is a strong influence on both the teachers' and students' behaviour in the classroom and, thus, should be seen as an important aspect of Korean pedagogy.

12.14.7 Hyodo.

One of the reasons why students feel *hyodo* towards their parents is a sense of duty, which is linked to the role one is expected to play. The child is a part of, and as an extension to, their parents as well as their extended family. This was shown in a teacher's comment in a focus group discussion (in Section 9.13.5): '...in order for a child to succeed a child needs grandparents' wealth, and parents' knowledge....'. In support of this view, the teachers in the focus group discussions (in Section 9.13.5), suggested that parents spend a large amount of money on after school programmes and will even move to a school that is considered higher in quality. It is clear that parents make a large sacrifice, both physically and financially, in providing a better learning environment for their child. This finding illustrates the Confucian principle that parents' basic role and duty are indulgence and devotion to their child (Kim et al, 2006). It is the obligation of the parent to provide essential material to support their child. The sacrifice and the devotion that parents and families show for the sake of education can be traced back historically as early as the *Three Kingdom* period (57 BC- 668 AD) (Kim-Renaud, 1991).

Thus, in return for parental love and dedication, the child feels that he or she has to repay parents' support by behaving in a manner that is fitting. Evidence from the focus groups showed that children recognised their parents' high expectations. For example, a student commented (in Section 9.14.2) that parents expect them to try hard. As Kim and Park (2003) argued, behind students' gratitude towards their parents, are recognition of parental sacrifice and parental suffering for the family. The sacrifice and support received from parents are viewed as essential ingredients for success. Stigler and Smith (1985) drew attention to the academic success of the child as a source of family pride; and children are driven by a sense of duty towards their parents. Sung (1992) developed this argument: the role of the child is to love and respect the parent by studying and working hard to obtain a promising and secure future for their family.

This study shows that primary school students recognised educational level, job and occupation as more than a source of income. Pedagogy in Korea reflects the importance of maintaining one's role, obligations and behaviour in society. These are defined by social expectation. The process of learning and the concept of education are affected by socio-cultural factors which reflect, determine and influence the pattern of teachers' and students' behaviour, not least in the pedagogy in Korean classrooms.

12.15 Conclusion.

This chapter has discussed the three research questions, incorporating relevant literature with the findings collected from this study. The study identified characteristics of the common Korean pedagogy found in national primary schools in Seoul.

Furthermore, teacher practices and students' learning behaviour were linked to the society's cultural norms and socio-cultural characteristics. The meaning attached to basic examples of pedagogy can vary from culture to culture. Moreover, local conditions affect classroom practices.

This study suggests, though, that the socio-cultural values, historical background and traditional language of Korea have had a profound influence on the core characteristics of pedagogy in the country's primary schools. The next chapter concludes the study. It addresses the implications of the study by summarising the key conclusions, discussing the effectiveness of the methodology and considering the implications of the research.

Chapter 13: Conclusion

13.1 Introduction.

The final chapter starts by summarising the findings and restating the key conclusions. Then, it considers the effectiveness of the methodology, and the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Finally it outlines the implications of the research for learners, educators and institutions, and discusses the impact this study could have on the community.

The research explored the following research questions;

1. Is there a common pedagogy in a sample of national primary schools in Seoul?
2. If so, what are its distinctive features?
3. How does the current social and cultural context of Korea influence the common pedagogy in primary state schools in Seoul?

13.2 Overview.

A combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods was incorporated sequentially, using a grounded theory approach in data analysis. Four teachers' and four students' focus group interviews were conducted to explore little known fields. The data from the focus group interviews was used to develop both teachers' and students' questionnaires. Questionnaires were collected from 294 teachers and 302 students from nine schools in Seoul to provide evidence of patterns amongst a larger population.

Further, to check for consistency, eight classroom observations and follow-up interviews were conducted based on results of the questionnaires.

Classroom pedagogy is argued in this study to be a combination of different ways of teaching, so that the child achieves understanding and learns. While theory is not disregarded, emphasis is placed on beliefs, cultural values and policies that shape the teaching environment. To place this study in context, any attempt to understand the classroom and the learning environment must take account of macro historical and cultural influences on the structure of the education system. Characteristics of traditional, socio-cultural and language features in Korea are found to affect the learning environment and features of the pedagogy in the classrooms.

The characteristics found to affect pedagogy in Korean primary schools are highlighted below:

1. The effect of historical and post war redevelopment.

This can be summarised as:

- The design and structure of the school/classroom were developed after the Korean war (1950-1953). A centralized education system provided structure and control.

There are many factors that influence how people function and behave. Inevitably, they affect the operation of the school system, which in turn affects the learning environment. The design and layout of the classroom and buildings are consequences of

the historical background, specifically the major reconstruction due to the wars and the enforced centralised nature of the education system.

Partly in response to globalisation, and partly to cater for changes in society, the education system introduced a policy of decentralisation in 1991 (Kim, 2000). However, strong pedagogical beliefs in the centralised system, together with a centralised exam system and parental pressure on their children to excel academically, resulted in limited changes in the current classroom environment. Teachers are confronted not only with restrictions imposed by the testing and exam system, but feel themselves to have limited autonomy and to be constrained by the teaching environment, such as the continued use of government issued teaching material.

2. The influence of traditional values and beliefs.

These can be summarised as:

- Structured classroom, a legacy of traditional teaching goals
- Learning is a lengthy and gradual process, as understood in traditional values
- Value of education and learning, as evident in traditional values
- Upward mobility through education, a traditional concept
- The idea that hard work increases ability, reflecting traditional values
- Strong parental involvement, reflecting traditional values

In line with traditional beliefs, well-established and structured teaching approaches are believed to contribute to learning. Learning is, thus, a gradual process in which ability can be increased through hard work, perseverance and reflection. Moreover, the

competitive nature of the Korean education system and society's high regard and consideration for education, ensure that Korean pedagogy remains focused on tests and exam driven. Educational recognition and attainment reflects society's desire for educational advancement. It strengthens motivation for learning and parents' involvement in supporting their child to achieve success. This is reminiscent of traditional respect for learning and attainment of the knowledge of the elite class known as *yangban*.

3. The socio-cultural effects.

These can be summarised as:

- Cultural roles and responsibility influence behaviour
- *Chemyeon* (preserves cultural harmony) dictates how people behave
- *Chemyeon (hyodo)* reflects social behaviour
- Existence of elite class traditionally known as the *yangban*

Korean socio-cultural values affect behaviour. The cultural roles and responsibility are created through the Confucian values of *chemyeon*, *hyodo* and *nunchi*, embedded within Korean society. The Confucian hierarchy of human relationships dictates and establishes order by defining and designating roles and setting responsibilities for each member of society. In addition, the cultural values of *chemyeon* and *hyodo* are embedded in society and exert pressure on a person to control and contain their emotions. For primary school students, these cultural values limit undesirable questions and interruptions in class. They also limit expectations of praise and encouragements from teachers. *Chemyeon* also indicates honour and reputation arising from his or her achievements that defines the child's status and the family's.

4. Elements of language.

These can be summarised as:

- Language emphasizes social status and cultural values
- Language emphasizes cultural roles and responsibilities
- Language structure contributes to implicit pedagogy
- The concept of ‘self’ affects classroom interaction

The terms of the honorific language influence people’s thoughts, and shape the behavioural pattern of the users by placing the teacher and student in their hierarchical positions, thus impacting on their behaviour. Hence, the language accentuates distinctions between the teacher’s and students’ role in society by setting clear defining boundaries.

5. Contemporary changes.

These may be summarised as:

- Changes in the family hierarchies

Changes are continually occurring with economic development and advances in technology. However, the traditional cultural heritage of Korean society remains, as do the values that it imprints on members of the society. It is not surprising, therefore, that despite growth and development, pedagogy in Korean primary schools is still influenced by the historical and cultural values that persist in Korean society.

13.2 Reflections on the study.

This research has identified characteristics of pedagogy in Korean primary schools. Further, it has demonstrated the influence on pedagogy in primary schools of historical and traditional socio-cultural values. Historical and cultural elements not only affect classroom behaviour and teaching approaches, but their influence is even evident in the entire national educational infrastructure and in the design of schools and classrooms. It is manifest at both the macro and the micro levels. Pedagogy is thus partly determined at the macro level as classrooms are part of the wider community of schools and beyond, that reflect cultural practices and social norms.

The comparative analysis of the differences in the socio-cultural characteristics of the schools' catchment areas showed up a few differences. It was successful in portraying the cultural belief that social status is earned and social mobility can be achieved through education. For example, the data in Table 10.18 and 10.19 showed a significant relationship between parents' level of education and the school catchment areas. The children whose parents had higher levels of education were reported in, not surprisingly, the higher socio-economic catchment areas. This is also illustrated in Table 10.13. This confirms the comment made in a teachers' focus group (in Section 9.13.2) that college graduates (white collar workers) are paid considerably more than high school graduates (blue collar workers,) therefore allowing them to live in more affluent areas.

Also, the higher socio-economic schools were in greater demand from parents. Class sizes in the high socio-economic districts were larger than in the low socio-economic schools (in Table 10.8). A teacher commented (in Section 9.13.5) that parents will go to

great length to provide a better learning environment for their child. The data suggest that a school in a high socio-economic district is more sought-after than one in a lower socio-economic area, even though it has larger classes. Parents are willing to move house so their child can attend a school which is considered higher in quality. Moreover, a teacher claimed (in Section 9.13.2), that marriages are still entered into between couples who meet similar 'conditions'. For example, the findings showed a broadly similar level of education between the mother and father (in Table 10.12).

The present study illustrates that there is still elitism with respect to *yangban* as these members of society were considered the ideal human beings in traditional Korea and this view continues to have an influence in Korean culture today.

13.3 Effectiveness of methodology.

The mixed method sequential exploratory design matched the purpose of the research objectives which aimed to obtain understanding of cultural characteristics and their effect on human behaviour, notably pedagogy in primary school classes in Korea.

There were three stages to this study. Focus group discussion, questionnaire and observation/follow-up interviews. The focus group was utilized to explore the field, the questionnaire to generate statistical data to allow greater generalization of the findings, and finally classroom observations and follow-up interviews permitted exploration and clarification of the findings. From the perspective of analysing its effectiveness, the methodology was logical in principle, but, in practice it did not work out as successfully as planned. At each stage of the study, it should have enabled me to answer questions that

I had not been able to answer with data from the previous stage, and thus to move to a deeper understanding of the topic. This was not fully achieved. For example, the problems in design of the questionnaire (Section 10.4.5) placed a limit on how far the questionnaires were able to add to data from the focus groups. Also, the follow-up interviews provided less information than I had originally hoped.

Nevertheless, examining the progression of the study, each stage did provide an additional perspective and throw further light on the research questions. The focus group discussion explored and identified unknown variables in the initial qualitative phase. Four broad categories and sub-themes were identified from the teachers' focus groups (in Figure 9.2) and four from the students' focus groups (in Figure 9.3). The next stage, the questionnaires, provided evidence of patterns amongst larger populations. Moreover, the focus group data were available in quantitative form and showed significant relationships with the questionnaire data. Finally, the third stage of classroom observations and interviews threw additional light on selected issues. As mentioned previously (in Section 7.1.2), what teachers say and what they actually end up doing sometimes varies (Galton, 1987). For example, in this study a high percentage of teachers believed that discussion based learning is an important teaching approach, but discussions were seldom observed in the classroom observations. Further, teachers claimed that students had become more disruptive in class due to changes in society. The classroom observations did not support the teachers' view. Thus, the classroom observations at the end of the study were able to corroborate some findings but did not support others.

Moreover, there was a slight concern that the presence of the observer during the non-participant observations could have led to contamination of the observation data. The observations showed well behaved and very conscientious students; however the significant disciplinary problem seen in the higher grades (mentioned in Section 12.10), concerns the researcher and raises a question whether students' behaviour during the observations was representative of their usual behaviour. However, in most cases the researcher was not the only visitor to the classes. The principal and parents were known to visit frequently and observe the class during the lessons. With advanced technology, it might have been possible in theory to collect data without subjects' awareness in order to provide a more authentic picture of the classroom. Nevertheless, to uphold ethical standards and to maintain the integrity of the research project, the observation could not have been conducted without participants' consent. I cannot discount the possibility that the presence of an observer affected the students' behaviour to some degree. However, as described in the methodology chapter, care was taken to reduce likelihood of contamination of data during observation. Furthermore, the significant changes in students' behaviour in the upper grades may not yet have affected students in the lower years. On the other hand, the results from the observations confirm very clearly that students' behaviour reflected the cultural characteristics of Korean society and the traditional Confucian values which this study has identified as important in understanding pedagogy in primary classes.

13.4 Limitations.

The study had the following limitations;

- Although the research field for this study was primary state schools in Korea, it focused on schools in the Seoul region. Inclusion of schools in other parts of Korea was beyond the scope of the research.
- It was not possible to establish a causal relationship between the cultural variables and classroom pedagogy.

13.4.1 Mitigation of the limitations to this study.

The focus on schools in the Seoul region and the small number of focus group interviews raised the question whether the views expressed by teachers and students were representative of teachers and students in other parts of Seoul and outside Seoul. The questionnaires in the second stage of this study were designed to answer this question. Although the questionnaires, too, were collected in the Seoul region, they involved a larger number of teachers and students, and produced results which are more likely to be representative of primary school teachers than the focus groups.

The causal relationship between the cultural variables and classroom pedagogy lies beyond the scope of this study. The emphasis was on finding patterns to identify the relationship between variables, and thus to establish a probable link between culture and pedagogy. It is possible, though, that descriptions by the teachers and students in the focus group interviews, and data collected from the questionnaires, may not provide all

relevant information. Teachers' statements about their classroom activities may be in accordance with their aims rather than their actual practices. What we do individually or collectively, and what we admit to others, is shaped by our culture. Nevertheless, the third stage of data collection through observation had the advantage of recording actual behaviour of students and teachers. Moreover, information was collected separately from teachers and from students. If either teachers or students were not providing valid information, one would expect to find inconsistencies in their accounts. The fact that no obvious inconsistencies were found is a reason for confidence in the data.

13.5 Contribution to knowledge.

This section outlines the contribution of this research to knowledge and understanding of primary school education in Korea. First, the research demonstrated the strength of cultural influences on teachers and children, with a sharp focus on approaches to teaching and learning. Although, it is important to monitor school effectiveness with outcomes measures such as test and examination results, these are of little use in understanding classroom activity. Nor, on its own, does the study of classroom processes throw light on the origin or meaning of these processes for teachers, their students or their students' parents. This is why the classroom was considered in this study as part of the wider community of schools and beyond, subject to cultural influences and reflecting cultural practices and social norms. Thus, the various meanings of what goes on in the classrooms were explored. Because the meaning of education is culturally bound, and therefore can vary from country to country, no single pedagogy or pedagogical practice

can be transported from one culture to another. This explains why the Korean government's policy of decentralisation had such limited impact.

Hence, pedagogy is country specific and also bounded by the values and context of the culture in which teaching takes place. Thus, while examination of foreign education systems should not be ignored, pedagogy cannot just be transferred to a different context without an in-depth understanding of the new context. An important aim of the decentralisation policy was to create opportunities for more interaction within the primary classroom. The data did not provide evidence that it succeeded in this aim. Both students and teachers are part of the local culture and implementation of foreign pedagogy is unlikely to be effective if the context of the local culture and the infrastructure of the education system are not understood.

Further, this study showed how culture is inter-related with language. Language is shown as a way of seeing, understanding and communicating with the world. Korean language is interwoven in the culture. The structure of the language affects the way meaning is created, communicated and understood. The results show how clearly the language of a culture influences social practices. Hence, the meaning and interpreting of behaviour should be understood within a cultural framework, and understanding the culture is necessary for interpreting classroom pedagogies.

Second, the review of literature demonstrated a range of stereotypical and divergent, or even contradictory, perceptions of Chinese, Japanese and Asian students and their classrooms. The cultural similarities between some of these nations are misrepresented when assumptions and generalisations are made, particularly when theories are

categorized into binary concepts. This study has identified some of the cultural characteristics that affect learning and teaching in primary school classrooms in Korea.

Furthermore, with new technologies communication has become faster and the number of students registering for international courses, and/or migrating to other countries, has expanded considerably. This research has identified differences between Korean and other cultures with regard to learning and teaching. This study should help to inform the practice of educators teaching Korean students.

Finally, although cultures are complex and pluralist entities, nonetheless useful insights can be gained by identifying key historical and ideologically loaded events such as post-war rebuilding, and cultural factors like Confucianism, *chemyeon*, and language structure. Together, these throw light on the cultural roles and responsibilities that inform and predict students' and teachers' behaviour. A similar methodology could be employed in the analysis of other cultures to inform educators and researchers. By reviewing relevant cultural and historical contexts and then analysing learning scenarios, school systems and even the physical design of the learning spaces, elements that appear to have an impact on learning in a culture can be identified and the less relevant ones discarded. Through this process, constructive guidance to support practitioners in understanding the culture of international students can be produced.

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Appendix 1: Focus group interview guide.

List of the important topic or topics I want to cover

1) Primary Education (Pedagogy means education in Korea)

What is it?

Influences

Control

Relationship

2) Classroom context

What/how is taught?

Development/learning

Plan for focus group interview and questions outline

Agenda of focus group interview with questions

1. Welcome
2. Overview of topic (5-10 Questions lasting for 1 to 1 1/2 hours)
3. Ground rules

Welcome script

Good evening and welcome to our session. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about the Korean primary state education. My name is Jee Min Cho and assisting me is Soo-youn. I am with the University of Warwick in England and come here to hear your views and perception of education in general. We are having discussions like this with several groups around Seoul. Your views and thoughts are very important to me and because of your expertise and familiarity with the education in Korea. I am here not to judge but to explore issues and understand the Korean education.

There can be no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that

we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

We're tape recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down. Although your names will be disclosed however we won't use any names in our reports. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

There will be approximately 4 questions for discussion and this session will last for 1 to 1,1/3 hours. I would ask all of you have your phones turned off. We've placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's names. Are there any questions before we start? Well, let's begin.

Our topic is ... Korean education

More probing questions

- o Can you say more about that?
- o Can you be more specific?
- o Can you give me an example of that?
- o Do others have similar or different experiences to share?
- o Would you explain further?

Questioning probes

- o How ...
- o What is it about ...
- o Tell me about ...
- o What is your experience with ...
- o Describe ...
- o Imagine ...
- o What caused/prompted/influenced/motivated you to ...

- o What features/attributes/qualities/characteristics of X do you particularly like/dislike ...

- o When/how often do you ...

- o Where do you ...

AVOID Questions like

- o Why did, why didn't, why do...

- o To what extent/how much ...

- o Would you agree...

- o Any question requiring a yes/no answer

Final END: Is there anything else you wish to add that I didn't ask you about?

Appendix 2: Focus group consent information and form.

You are invited to take part in this research study. This form tells you why this research study is being done, what will happen in the research study. Then you can decide if you want to join this study or not.

As part of the requirements for PhD degree at Warwick University in England, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with the characteristics of Korean pedagogy and the effects of Korean socio-cultural aspects.

If you agree to participate in this study, you would participate in a focus group discussion. The focus group will be led by me. The topics that will be discussed during the focus group include examining education, teaching and learning. The focus group will last approximately one hour.

The focus group will be audio-recorded in order to accurately capture what is said. If you participate in the study, you may request that the recording be paused at any time. You may choose how much or how little you want to speak during the group. You may also choose to leave the focus group at any time. The focus group will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy. You can ask to pause the recording at any time.

The data collected from the focus group discussion will be used and to complete the requirements of this dissertation. This data will not be used elsewhere and the information collected will be used in anonymity. The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, they will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in a research journal.

If you need any further information, you can email me: j.m.cho@warwick.uk.ac

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form.

Consent Form

I.....agree to participate in Jee-min Cho's research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission to be tape-recorded

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

All information discussed in the focus group is confidential and I will not discuss the contents of the discussion or information about other participants outside of the focus group

Signed..... Date.....

Appendix 3: Teacher questionnaire.

Please tick your selected answers.

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. What is your age?

☐ 18-20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ 61-70

3. Where do you currently teach?

(.....) Suburb

4. How long have you been teaching?

☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 2-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11- 20 years ☐ 21-30
years ☐ 31+ years

5. Number of students in your class?

☐ Less than 10 ☐ 10-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-40
☐ more than 40

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Middle school ☐ High school ☐ University ☐ Masters ☐ PhD

7. Which of the following are involved in planning and decision making procedure in schools and classrooms?

Teachers' planning and decision making	agree
Teachers' make important decisions for the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
New ideas are encourage in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers' have authority to choose how lessons are taught	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers' have authority to choose instruction material	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Which of the following influences your teaching?

Constraints of teaching environment	agree
Strict use of text books	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of curriculum/ teachers manual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restriction to time/ school schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum driven by exams	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influence of technology	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influence of TV media	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Which of the following is important for teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning	agree
Results matter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn from mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Memorising	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student's interest	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>
Repetition	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouragement	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Which of the following do you agree with?

Social and cultural	agree
Results are important	<input type="checkbox"/>
Status of university equals economic status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good students reflect good grades	<input type="checkbox"/>
Achievement uphold family status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traditional cultural values are transmitted in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students are like family	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong parental involvement in education	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 4: Student questionnaire.

Please tick your answers.

Background information

1. How old are you?

☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12 ☐ 13

2. What grade are you in?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6

3. How many in your classroom?

☐ Less than 15 ☐ 15-20 ☐ 21-25 ☐ 21-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ More than 30

4. How old are your parents?

☐ Less than 30 ☐ 30-35 ☐ 36-40 ☐ 41-45 ☐ 46-50

5. What is your parent's occupation?

☐ Teacher ☐ Sales ☐ Service ☐ Professor ☐ Doctor ☐ Office worker ☐ Government
☐ own business ☐ other

6. What is the final level of education for your dad

☐ High school ☐ University ☐ Postgraduate

7. What is the final level of education for your mum

☐ High school ☐ University ☐ Postgraduate

Views on education and school

8. Why do you go to school?

Meaning of school	agree
School is a place to play	<input type="checkbox"/>
School is a place to learn	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy doing school work	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
I go to school because I want to go to school	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. What motivates you to learn?

Motivation	agree
Knowledge advancement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help function in society	<input type="checkbox"/>
To enter university	<input type="checkbox"/>
To obtain good job	<input type="checkbox"/>
High grades	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents' high expectation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher influence	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Which style of teaching do you prefer?

Teaching and learning	agree
Activity based projects	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work presented on the blackboard	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers clear explanation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Which after school programmes do you take?

After school programmes	agree
Maths	<input type="checkbox"/>
English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing/ Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other language	<input type="checkbox"/>
sports	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art/music	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 5: Questionnaire consent information and form.

Letter to questionnaire participants

As part of the requirements for PhD degree at Warwick University in England, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with the characteristics of Korean pedagogy and the effects of Korean socio-cultural aspects.

The study will involve approximately ten minutes of your time. You have been asked because your response is specifically suitable to provide data for this study.

Participation is voluntary. The data collected from this questionnaire will be used and to complete the requirements of this dissertation. This data will not be used elsewhere and the information collected will be used in anonymity.

The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, they will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed.

The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in a research journal.

If you need any further information, you can contact me: j.m.cho@warwick.uk.ac

Returning the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate.

Appendix 6: Observation schedule checklist.

School name: _____

(Note: Three minute interval)

Teachers activity	Tally
Teacher works from blackboard	
Teacher works from TV	
Teacher work from text book	
Work from worksheet	
Explain key elements	
Teacher questions class/pupil	
Settling down class	
Praise, encouragement	
Students activity	Tally
Peer interaction (Discussion)	
Repeat teacher	
Pupils listen to peer	
Pupils engage on task	
Pupils listen /work from blackboard	
Pupils listen /work off TV	
Pupils listen /work from textbook	
Pupils listen /work from worksheet/activity	

Appendix 7: Follow up interview questions.

Teachers

Q1. The lessons are structured and fast paced. Can you explain why?

Q2. I noticed you used the textbook and computer programmes when teaching. What are your reasons for using them?

Q3. The computer programme you used during your lesson was so professional. Did it take a long time to make them?

Q4. Do you always incorporate an activity with your lessons?

Q5. What do you think of the frequent ten minute breaks in between the lessons?

Q6. Why did you get the students to repeat you?

Q7. Are the students always well behaved and on task?

Q8. Does the student always use formal language during school hours?

Q9. What happens when a student misbehaves?

Student

Q1. Why didn't any of you ask questions in class?

Appendix 8: Observation informed consent.

Letter to observation participants

Your child is invited to take part in this research study. This form tells you why this research study is being done, what will happen in the research study, and possible risks and benefits to your child. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask questions. Then you can decide if you want to join this study or not.

As part of the requirements for PhD degree at Warwick University in England, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with the characteristics of Korean pedagogy and the effects of Korean socio-cultural aspects. The study will involve classroom observation. The teacher and most of the children in your child's class are expected to participate in this study. I will observe your child's classroom and interaction that goes on between the students and the teacher. The observation may last from a fifty minutes to several hours. The class will also be videotaped.

Your child's participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your child may withdraw from this study at any time. Your child may participate in the study and to withdraw at any time.

The data collected from classroom observation will be used and to complete the requirements of this dissertation. This data will not be used elsewhere and the information collected will be used in anonymity. The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, they will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in a research journal.

If you need any further information, you can contact your teacher or email me:
j.m.cho@warwick.uk.ac

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form.

Consent Form

I.....agree to participate in Jee-min Cho's research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission to be video-taped

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

Signed.....

Date.....